



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07491881 8

John Webb's End.



Australian
Bush Life.

London:
EDEN, REMINGTON & CO.

Stanley L Wood

Francis
Adams.

1. no subject

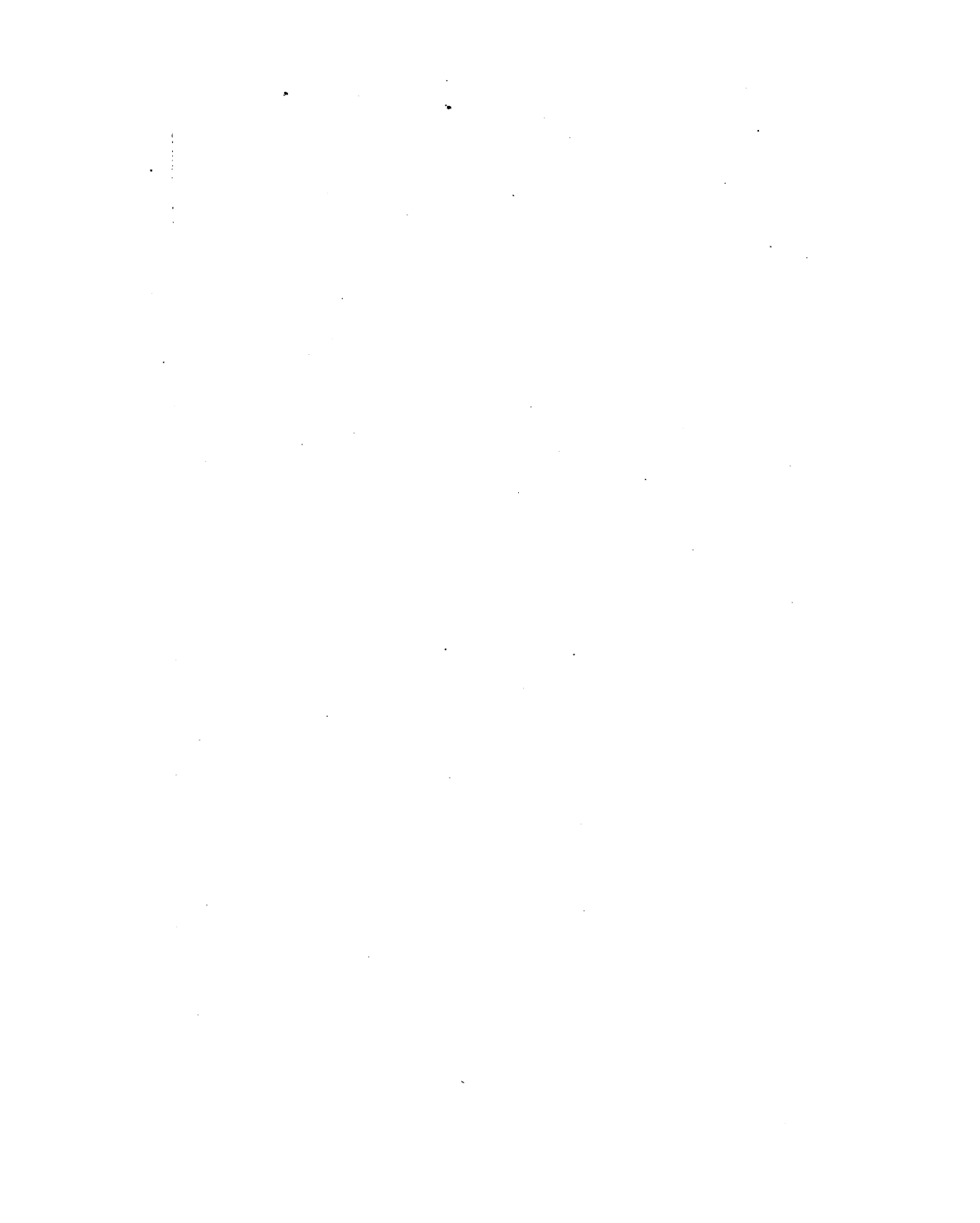
NCW
Adams

JOHN WEBB'S END

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

SONGS OF THE ARMY OF THE NIGHT. 2s 6d.

*Vizetelly & Co., 16 Henrietta Street
Covent Garden*





JOHN WEBB'S END

Australian Bush Life.

BY

FRANCIS ADAMS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

C. H. HUNT AND A. COLLINGRIDGE.

*'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for
love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.'*

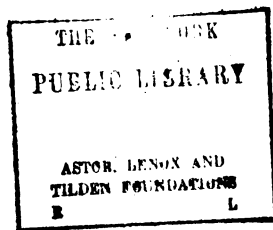
London:

EDEN, REMINGTON & CO., PUBLISHERS
KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

1891

1118



TO
MY DEAR FRIENDS,
ERNEST AND GERTRUDE BLACKWELL,
OF SYDNEY.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PROLOGUE—THE FATHER AND THE MOTHER, .	I

PART I.

I. YOUTHFUL STRUGGLES,	13
II. THE WORLD WITHOUT,	30
III. SELF-REVELATIONS,	46
IV. BITTER SWEETNESS,	69
V. BREAKING AWAY,	99
VI. AN ARTIST,	116
VII. GIRLS' HEARTS,	132

PART II.

I. TOIL AND TROUBLE,	155
II. AFTERGLOW,	180
III. THE TRUTH OF IT,	200
IV. RECKONING DAY,	222
V. A BUSH JOURNALIST,	245
VI. SOCKET FLICKERINGS,	263
EPILOGUE—'FATE'S ONLY GUERDON,'	274

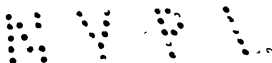
STRONG AS DEATH.

PROLOGUE.

THE FATHER AND THE MOTHER.

It was one of those mild misty mornings which sometimes surprise London, like magical interludes and anticipations of the spring, in November, the sunless, wintry month of fogs. A detachment of the Horse Guards was slowly defiling into one of the streets by St James'. The steamy atmosphere seemed inly suffused with the sunlight which was struggling for the mastery. The steam rose up from the horses, from the mouths and nostrils of the soldiers and of the small and listless crowd that had gathered at the corners to see them defile. A gentleman, attracted by noticing that

A



the officer in command of the detachment was an acquaintance, stood on the outskirts, watching with a certain interest. Presently passers-by and street-loafers, coming up stragglingly, more or less surrounded him. The detachment went bending round a corner a little way off, and then the last man disappeared. The gentleman turned to one side rather quickly with a smile and an exclamation to himself, and felt a tug at his fob. He at once looked down, at the same time receiving from behind a shove that threw him up against a man who was standing in front of him. In a moment it flashed across the gentleman's mind that he had been robbed, and his one idea was to see and catch the robber. He recovered himself and turned round sharply. A few yards from him he saw moving quickly away out of the slowly dispersing crowd, a tall man with broad sloping shoulders and a slouch hat.

'Stop that man,' he cried aloud, springing forward, 'he has robbed me!'

J. G. V. N.

In a few moments the man was aware that he was attracting public attention, and turned, showing a fine reckless frowning face. The gentleman came up and caught hold of him, repeating his statement that he had been robbed. The man almost fiercely threw off the other's hold and would have made away, had not a policeman opportunely arrived and, with an instantaneous perception of the state of affairs, caught him by the wrist. The man, however, at once instinctively pressing it down against the weak place in a hand-grip, the junction of the thumb and fingers, liberated himself, and asked with an angry oath what they wanted with him? The gentleman again repeated his statement. The man answered with another oath that it was a lie. The crowd gathered round again quickly. The gentleman with decision, having formally given the man into custody, turned about and asked if anyone had seen the theft committed? There was a pause, and then one who looked like a respectable

workman said that he had seen 'him there take a silk handkerchief out of the gentleman's pocket and put it in his own. At the same moment the policeman produced a silk handkerchief from the side-pocket of the man's coat, and the gentleman at once recognised it as his. A movement was perceptible in the crowd as of someone trying to get to the front. It was a woman. Unable to advance, she cried out that he (the man) had *not* robbed the gentleman.

'He is my husband,' she said simply, as if no further remark was necessary.

There was a general laugh, even the gentleman and policeman smiling.

'Now,' said the gentleman, 'let us get on. I want the matter settled quickly.'

The man was led away, silent and sullen. Once hearing his wife's voice, he glanced over his shoulder, and a strange doubtful look came into his face. Then he turned again and moved on as it were by himself, looking neither to right nor left.



The man was led away, silent and sullen.

The Magistrate was sitting. He was a personal acquaintance of the gentleman who had been robbed. The case was clear and needed small discussion. The man was committed for trial.

From that time forward he preserved a sullen and unbroken silence. He rejected all efforts at defence. He even refused to see his wife. It could only end one way. The Judge passed sentence of transportation for seven years—to New South Wales.

‘Transportation?’ said the man, looking up, ‘. . . . Hadn’t you better hang me at once?’

There was a momentary silence in the court.

‘He is my husband,’ said a voice.

It was his wife, up in the public gallery, standing gazing at him steadfastly, oblivious of all else but him. Her face was lit up with the wonderful light of love which of itself gives beauty.

‘Dick, Dick,’ she said, ‘*speak to me!*’

The hand of the attendant policeman was

on the man's shoulder, pressing him gently from the dock. In answer of his wife's appeal, he turned his head as he had done once before and with the same strange doubtful look. He had been a hot-headed generous country lad, misunderstood at home and at last cursed and driven thence by a stubborn, despotic, religious father. And she, who had always loved him, had, almost despite himself, married him, believing that it would 'come alright in the end.' And he had worked steadily and earnestly at his little farm, but all his work had failed, and he had begun to believe that his father's curse, the curse of God, was indeed upon him. And now, arraigned for an offence which he had not committed, proved guilty by (as it seemed to him) almost miraculous proof, the last blow had fallen and he was condemned for ever.

He did not look at her. He had been considering all his past life, and had in a manner weighed it and found it wanting, and now he turned his head again and moved

away by himself, looking neither to right nor left.

Later on he still refused to let his wife see him, nor would he give any explanation to her. The one sign that he gave from his prison was a short letter to his father, acknowledging his faults and asking him to do what he could for his daughter-in-law, adding that they could rely on his own death within a few years, and that it was his hope and wish she should marry again, and a better man.

Thus Richard Webb, having done all he could to free the woman he loved from the inevitable curse which he believed rested on him, went forth as a felon from his own country to 'dree his weird' alone. But, if he had calculated rightly on his love for her, and what it could help him to endure, he had calculated wrongly on her love for him. Her anguish of mind at his refusal to see her had been intense, but it had passed into something not unlike joy: she had divined its cause. A few months after Webb's ship

sailed, her child, a boy, was born. She was patient, and at times even happy. She would lie for hours looking at it, talking to it, crooning over it with smiles and tears, telling it the whole tale over and over again, and how, as soon as they were strong, they were going after daddy, they two, baby and she!

And at last they went, and at last her belief that it would 'come alright in the end' was verified—so far that she lived to see her husband a prosperous Riverina squatter, her children growing up full of strength and beauty, and herself a happy wife and mother. Then it seemed as if the life of this sweet delicate woman, intensified and gathered up within a decade, suddenly failed her. She died, or as it seemed to her husband, simply passed away. The curse had been lifted from him, he thought, but at the cost of her life. She died early one autumn morning. That afternoon he locked himself up in the room with her. Outside was all the mellow brightness and heat of the fair April day.

The breeze came in through the open window, bellying out the curtain and filling the room with the fresh faint smell of the surrounding flowery plains and scrub. They had folded her hands across her breast, holding a cross of flowers; she had always liked the Australian flowers with their intense colours. She had a taste, she said, for 'a bit o' colour.' He stood looking at her and thinking of her words. This man, full of love, had never been able to tell it, and now he could not tell his sorrow. He had never prayed in his life that he could remember; his prayers at home as a boy had not come from deeper than the lips. He did not even know that he wished to pray now; he did not know *what* he wished. He was vaguely conscious that he and everyone were in the power of Someone—or Something; and that that was why his life and hers had been as they had been; and he would have liked to have eased his heart by saying that he had loved her more than life, and that he loved her more than death. The sun sank, filling

both west and east with innumerable rosy clouds. He had sat down on the floor, leaning his head against the bedside, almost touching her. Love had not loosened the tongue of this dumb soul, and neither had death.

PART I.

I.

YOUTHFUL STRUGGLES.

WEBB had three children, two boys and a girl, the girl the second. He had a certain amount of affection for them all, but in no case did this affection deepen into love, except at moments in the case of the daughter Bessie when she reminded him of her mother. The purpose of his life, he felt, was fulfilled, and it almost seemed to him at times as if it would be better for him to be lying in the quiet earth with his wife. It was with an almost wild instinct of self-preservation that he threw himself into the work of his sheep-station—Marragong. He grew more and more out of sympathy with

his children. His work began to take to him the form of a renewed purpose, in comparison with which all other things were of secondary importance. The mother, following out the instinct of her early, Puritan yeoman breeding, had from the first attempted to educate her children as far as she was able. She taught them all to read and write, and both because of her conviction and of the fact that books were so scarce as to be all but wanting, made them students of their Bibles. Webb now broke in upon all this. He took his eldest son John, and used him from morning till night on the station. At that time wire-fences were not frequent, and the labour of keeping in repair the fences of log and brushwood was great. Webb, too, was increasing his boundaries by leasing crown lands. John, who had small care for learning more than his mother had taught him, at first took readily to the unbroken life of a boundary rider and station hand. He had a certain love of nature. The long morning rides round the fences

were not lonely to him. He took a pleasure in the bright breezy sky and air, in the birds and beasts which it was his business to kill or let alone. He wanted no other companion than these and his thoughts ; even his horse and sheep-dog and kangaroo-dog gained no fixed place in his life. Like his father before him, he grew silent without growing sullen ; but, under this silence, lurked also his father's subdued recklessness. Sometimes he would be careless and even cruel to his animals. Terrible fits of passion would come upon him, and seldom passed away without leaving their marks behind them. He had much pride, and found it hard to endure the imperiousness which seemed to grow greater and greater in his father as the years passed on. To the son, too, the years brought their inevitable change. His life, acting on his temper, began slowly to brutalise him. His silence began to lose in sweetness and gain in sullenness. More than once the imperiousness of the father was met by the son's resistance—resistance that was only dogged

because old habits of obedience prevented it for the time from violence. The home life, once so happy, was becoming more and more strained and suppressed. Bessie, the true child of her mother, vainly tried to better it. But now even Billy, her little brother, was taken from her to be made into a drudge, and all three, her father and her brothers, drew more and more away from her as her work and theirs kept them actually apart. Ill-health and disease came to make things worse. Webb was now in a chronic state of irritation, troubled at times with even morbid suspicions. Once, after an explosion of wrath at some slight piece of neglect on John's part, he threatened to drive them all out of the house.

'I say,' he exclaimed, 'that you are all agin me. You'd be glad if the drought broke me. But it *shall* not! I'll baulk every one of you!'

John, unable to control himself if he stayed longer, was moving away to the door, when Webb turned and, with an oath and

lifted arm, strode up to him. In an instant the lad had drawn his large clasp knife and held it presented. The two glared at one another for a few moments in silence, and then John, never removing his eyes from his father's, went out.

This domestic storm cleared the air for a little, by forcing Webb to realise that he was not perhaps acting quite rightly towards his son, and indeed towards them all. John, too, having for the first time given way to his violent instincts with his father, felt a certain remorse which took the shape of a submissiveness that was almost tender.

But Webb was now too much out of sympathy with his children to remain long in his present humour towards them. This abnormal gentleness, on the part of his son, soon began to seem to him an acknowledgment of being in the wrong, and so, in a few weeks, the old state of affairs reasserted itself, and John was confirmed in his savage self-restraint. He kept away from his father as much as possible. Every

morning after breakfast, when the two went round to the stables together, and Webb gave particular directions as to what he wished him to do, John found it difficult to meet his father's imperiousness with anything but dogged silence. Man after man, coming to the station as boundary-rider and second hand had found it impossible to endure 'the boss,' and had left. Webb cared nothing for it. They were all treated in the same way. If they did not like the place, he said, then they might go. It was the same with any men whom he employed on the station—shepherds, splitters, the very knock-about boys. It had been with much reluctance that he had increased the number of his employees, but his ever-growing land and stock rendered it absolutely necessary. He satisfied his parsimonious instincts by taking as few as possible, and making up the deficiency by working them all as hard as he could. This almost ruthless way of working was a sort of relief to him, and he could not or would not see that it

affected others differently. Occasionally there would be incidents which roused everyone against him. One of his shepherds, the only man who had found it possible to endure more than a year with him (he had endured fifteen), watching the sheep at night, caught a severe cold which developed into rheumatic fever, and he never properly recovered from it. He was old, and had done Webb good service. Among other things he had been the only man who had stopped on the station at the time when the first 'gold-rushes' left the stations empty of all save the squatters and their families. He had not even asked for an increase of wages; and, if Mrs Webb had not importuned her husband on the subject, would not have had any. Webb now paid the man up to the day he had fallen ill, and turned him away. Some of the people of the neighbouring township of Warana clamoured among themselves about the matter, and at last one was bold enough to openly tax Webb with it. He had been into Warana

for the night on business, and was just going to get up onto his horse, which was standing at a bridle-post in the road, opposite the door of the Royal, the mail or leading hotel, round which were gathered several of the Warana people and a small group of non-descript idlers. For a moment he stared at the man in silence, then turned away, making a quick stride towards his horse; then turned back again, and, with his face dark and swollen with passion, said—

‘It’s d——d good for you I—’

Further than that he could not get in speech, but, wheeling round fiercely, went to his horse, caught up the reins, leaped on to his back and, catching the stirrups, spurred him up and away.

At home the incident was still unfinished. When he returned, he found John walking up and down the room before Bessie and Billy, struggling to suppress his resentment at the shepherd’s expulsion, which he had just seen carried into effect. It was indeed a mere chance that Webb had not met the



An access of wrath seized upon Webb. He leaped up, and threatened to strike her.

disconsolate family coming with their miserable bits of furniture in a spring-cart into Warana. On his entry John went straight out. Webb knew quite well what it all meant. He turned fiercely on Billy, and asked him what the —— he was doing there? The excited boy crept out, frightened but rebellious. Bessie brought her father something to eat and drink, and then, when he seemed to have settled down a little, ventured to speak gently of the shepherd and his family. An access of wrath seized upon Webb. He leaped up and threatened to strike her; then, with an effort overcoming himself, said, turning away—

‘If ever I hear his —— name again, I’ll knock yer down!’

And so at last the incident finished, but it left its permanent effects behind it. John was now convinced that his father cared nothing for anyone, or for anything save making money and having his own high-handed way; or, as John put it, ‘bossing it.’ Once he said so to Bessie, and her hesi-

tating defence showed that she almost agreed with him. This somewhat simplified affairs to the lad. He resolved that he would not allow himself to suffer all year long this perpetual 'nigger-driving,' and that in the department of the station work which was consigned to him, he would no longer brook petty interference. And, after a series of struggles with his father, one or two of which bordered dangerously on personal violence, he was successful. He had an intelligence above the average, and had for some time interested himself in everything connected with both sheep and cattle farming. He never lost an opportunity either by reading or talking with people, to widen his knowledge. And, as he became more and more convinced that his father was incompetent to teach him anything, he became more and more determined to have his own way in, at any rate, small matters. If he thought his father was doing wrong in any large matter, he would now say so, not, as might have been expected, sulkily or even

bluntly, but with a certain amount of tact, backing up what he said with his reasons. And thus after a time Webb began to see that his son's opinion was worth having, and, without openly admitting the fact, to be ready to consider, and even sometimes to follow it. This presently brought about, to Bessie's great joy, an improved state of affairs in the home life. The improvement, however, was merely relative. The home life was indeed so miserable that John, conscious of his growing power, began to turn his eyes towards Warana and wish to mix a little in the society which it afforded. To do this required leisure, and leisure he had none. From six or seven o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night, he was engaged in his work of overseeing, boundary riding, and what not. He had now two men permanently under him, and the work to be done required at least three. He determined to broach the subject. It was met by a furious explosion of wrath, and rejected.

The summer, happening to be a very hot and dry one, the kangaroos and emus crowded in to the central portion of the run, where the grass was more plentiful, owing to this portion being the base of a rather extensive watershed and so the tanks still keeping pretty full. A fierce war was waged with them, but it seemed to have little effect on their actual numbers. Webb's irritability was frightful. Night after night he and John sat up at the tanks, to which the kangaroos, alarmed, but driven by the irresistible cravings of thirst, came down, and shot them by dozens. One or two of the paddocks had just been enclosed with wire-fences, and these were now constantly being broken by the 'mobs' of flying kangaroos or emus. Added to this, the birds, following out their mischievous instincts, kept chasing the sheep which, in their present weak condition, were quite unable to bear this racing up and down. The drought continued on into the winter, and at last things culminated in one of the brush-wood fences

inexplicably catching fire and the whole run being with difficulty saved from the flames. Such a drought as this had not occurred since that which followed on Mrs Webb's death, six years ago.

One spring morning Webb and John had just started out together when they put up some emu. It was impossible with their weak animals to ride the birds down, but Webb, perceiving that a long wire-fence directly faced them, told John to ride to the right and thus drive the emu onto him. John did so, and the birds, as soon as they reached the fence, turned off and bore down at full speed onto Webb, who was wrathfully awaiting them. He fired the first barrel of his gun, and two dropped; then, trying to get more into the line of them, fired the second, striking one in the neck and John in the left side. It was with difficulty that the lad kept his saddle as he quieted and walked his horse up to his father and told him that he was hit.

Webb came up to him and looked at his

clothes which were rent where the shot had entered.

‘Pooh,’ he said, ‘it’s nothing.’

John turned away and rode silently home. As his sister was examining his side, and seeing if there were any shot that could be picked out, he said :

‘I don’t believe, Bess, he’d have cared a d— if he’d killed me.’

‘Hush, John!’ she said. ‘Don’t talk like that!’

‘But it’s true,’ he answered, ‘and, if I serve him another day without wages, then I’m damned!’

‘Hush,’ said Bessie again, ‘don’t!’

‘He shall pay me wages,’ he proceeded, calmly, not wincing as his sister picked out a shot with the point of his knife, ‘like any-one else on the station, and, if we don’t suit one another, we can part. That’s all.’

The next morning, accordingly, after breakfast, at the stable, John quietly stated his intentions. To his surprise his father without demur accepted them. The occa-

sion, it is true, was propitious. There had been a sudden heavy downfall of rain during the night, and the cloudful sky and north-easterly wind signified more to come. But John had no intention of letting the matter rest here. He returned at once to his original idea of an extra man on the station. Webb again accepted, and John came back to the house exceedingly pleased.

‘Well,’ said Bessie, lifting up her sweet, quiet face with its brown, intelligent eyes as he entered, ‘what does he say, John?’

‘He agrees,’ answered John, throwing his hat down into a chair and himself into another. ‘And now I intend going into Warana a bit after the shearing.’

Bessie was silent. It seemed to her that, after all, all men were alike. They seemed only to care to resist oppression when it weighed upon themselves. How much effort would John make to help poor little Billy whose life was so dull and cheerless? And, she might have added, herself, whose life was certainly not overburdened with joy.

II.

THE WORLD WITHOUT.

JOHN had reached what he looked upon as an epoch in his life. Silent as he had always been, sullen as he had now become for several years, he had at bottom a fund of social feeling which was strong enough to make him think it stronger than it really was. Even Webb, despotic master though he appeared in his own household, would occasionally, meeting a stranger, have humours of bright pleasantness which recalled his early youth. Then the thought occurring to him, he would suddenly fall silent, and astonish the stranger by an abrupt departure. John, in his lonely rides and work, had unconsciously turned his meagre fund of social feeling into something of an ideal. He be-

lieved that if he could go into Warana and mix with the people there, it would make him happy. Visions of talks with intelligent men and pretty girls rose before him. On one of the few occasions on which he had ridden into the township, he had been to see a Mrs Allen, an old friend of his mother's, and had had afternoon tea with her. There had been present Mrs Allen, one of her daughters, and a young girl, a friend, the daughter of one of the neighbours. This tea had remained to John a charming memory. The very names of those who had taken part in it—Mrs Allen, Alice, Beatrice (Mrs Allen indeed took shape to him as 'mama,' the name by which he had heard her frequently addressed by Alice)—had in them something of the pleasure of a delightful dream. It was a glimpse of a sort of home-life which powerfully affected him. From the first to the last, Webb's sole interest in his home had been his wife. The few hours that he had to spare each day were devoted exclusively to her. To him the children were

all more or less accidents, which he, of course, accepted, but for which he had no direct personal feeling. The mother had felt this and striven vainly against it; for the children, instinctively recognising something antipathetic in their father, drew back from him and refused to accept the clumsy advances which his wife persuaded him to make. To her too her wifedom was the great fact of her life, but it did not for all that exclude the fact of her motherhood. She had a heart and spirit large enough for both. Of her children, John had loved her with a love that resembled his father's; Bessie with a love that resembled her own, and Billy as a child loves a dear nourisher and protector. She had always been to them all 'mother.' When, therefore, John saw a bright, pretty woman like Mrs Allen, who seemed indeed nothing but an elder sister of her daughter, she and the life she represented struck him as a new type—she was a 'mama.' It was the same to a certain extent with Alice. She was so different, he

thought, to Bessie—Bessie, of whom indeed circumstances had made a mother before she was a woman. And this other girl, this Beatrice (What a beautiful name, Beatrice! —Beatrice, all in full, so unlike Kitty, or Polly or Minnie—or Bessie!)—she was only a child, but how different, and in a way how much rarer than (he did not like to think superior to) himself! He had felt beside her as one of the great black satiny crows might feel, flying for a moment by a lovely, melodious top-knot pigeon—the crows that swoop perpetually around the house to steal the hen's eggs or kill the young ducks, sitting cawing ravingly in the trees as the hunter cuts off the dead kangaroo's ears and hacks a steak for the dogs. As he looked at her, he felt all the hardness of his life of toil, and, ever since he had seen her, the dream of such a girl as she, to leave every morning to sweet and gentle avocations about the pretty station house and return to every evening, had kept presenting itself to him as something ideal and almost superhuman.

And now he was going to see these people again and others like them !

It seemed to him almost strange, the diffidence, nay the absolute timidity with which he rode into the township that Saturday morning. It was more than six months since he had been in it at all: more than a year since that remarkable visit to Mrs Allen's. Everyone knew him, and not in the most agreeable way, for some of his father's unpopularity was transferred to him. The general idea of the Webb family was, that they were, as the word went, a queer lot, and a hard lot. People journeying and coming, in the good Australian fashion, up to the house for the hospitality of two meals and a night's harbouring, took away a far from agreeable impression of their host and even of their hostess, setting down Bessie's simple undemonstrativeness as absolute coldness. 'Swagsmen' too, genuine, or only 'sundowners'—men who loaf about till sunset, and then come in with the demand for the unrefusable 'rations'—did their best to

decry this well-to-do ex-convict squatter who gave them their pannikin of flour and only their pannikin of flour. Stories, too, of Webb's violence were still afloat. Only a week ago, at the shearing, in a fit of fury at a clumsy shearer who had answered a torrent of abuse with a few words of insolence, 'the boss' had caught hold of the man : snatched his shears out of his hand (the man was half prepared to stab with them) and threw him with such violence against one of the inside pen-gates that he had been stunned. Angry, again, at one of his largest paddocks, ('the Warana paddock' as it was called on the station,) being made use of as a road to neighbouring homesteads, Webb had changed two of the gates, thus compelling passengers to make a detour of several miles ; and, shortly afterwards, meeting a rider who had leaped his horse over the brush-wood fence and was coming along by the old track, he had fiercely turned him back, threatening to use a stock-whip to him. John saw quickly enough that there was an inclination

on the part of the Warana people to be cold to him, and fully aware of the reason, had yet too much of his own father's temper in him to care to propitiate them. Even Rowe, the proprietor of the Royal, was just civil to him and no more.

In less than a quarter of an hour all John's anticipations of pleasure in Warana had been spoiled. Instead of a pleasant talk with Rowe about business matters, he had scarce exchanged twenty words with him. The story of the stunned sheep-shearer and of the threatened passenger, none other than a clerk at one of the banks, was in everyone's mouth still. The unforgettable word '*convict*' was perpetually rising as a comment on the matter. John, riding sullenly, almost savagely through the last sweltering glare of the afternoon sun down the chief street, conscious of rows of people standing at doors or under verandahs staring at him, imagined once that he absolutely heard the word called out to him, and started in his saddle as if he had been shot.

'And yet,' he thought to himself as he passed on to the little wooden bridge that bounded the place, 'there could not have been *many* people staring at me. I must have fancied it.' But he cursed them.

Just past the bridge the road that led home swept off to the right. He must turn off to the left if he wished to go to Mrs Allen's. But why should he? They would be the same to him there! Or they would wonder why he had come? What had *he* to do with *them*? No, the best place for him was riding round the paddocks or slaving at station work.

As he went on thus, sitting loosely in his saddle, reflecting darkly, and even bitterly, he heard the sound of a horse cantering up behind him, but took no heed of it, till, coming alongside, the rider hailed him. John looked up and recognised Michael Carter, the son of a neighbouring squatter, and a young man for whose acuteness he had a certain respect, but for whose general

character he had an antipathy deep and instinctive.

Carter at once disclosed what he wanted. One of the wire fences, that acted as boundary between his father's run and Webb's, had been cut, and a large number of the former's sheep had passed through the gap.

'Cut?' said John. 'Who cut it?'

'Some swagsman, probably,' answered Carter.

John kept silence for a little. They had passed the place where he would have to turn off if he wished to go to Mrs Allen's.

'Very well,' he said, 'I'll see to it to-morrow. Good-day!'

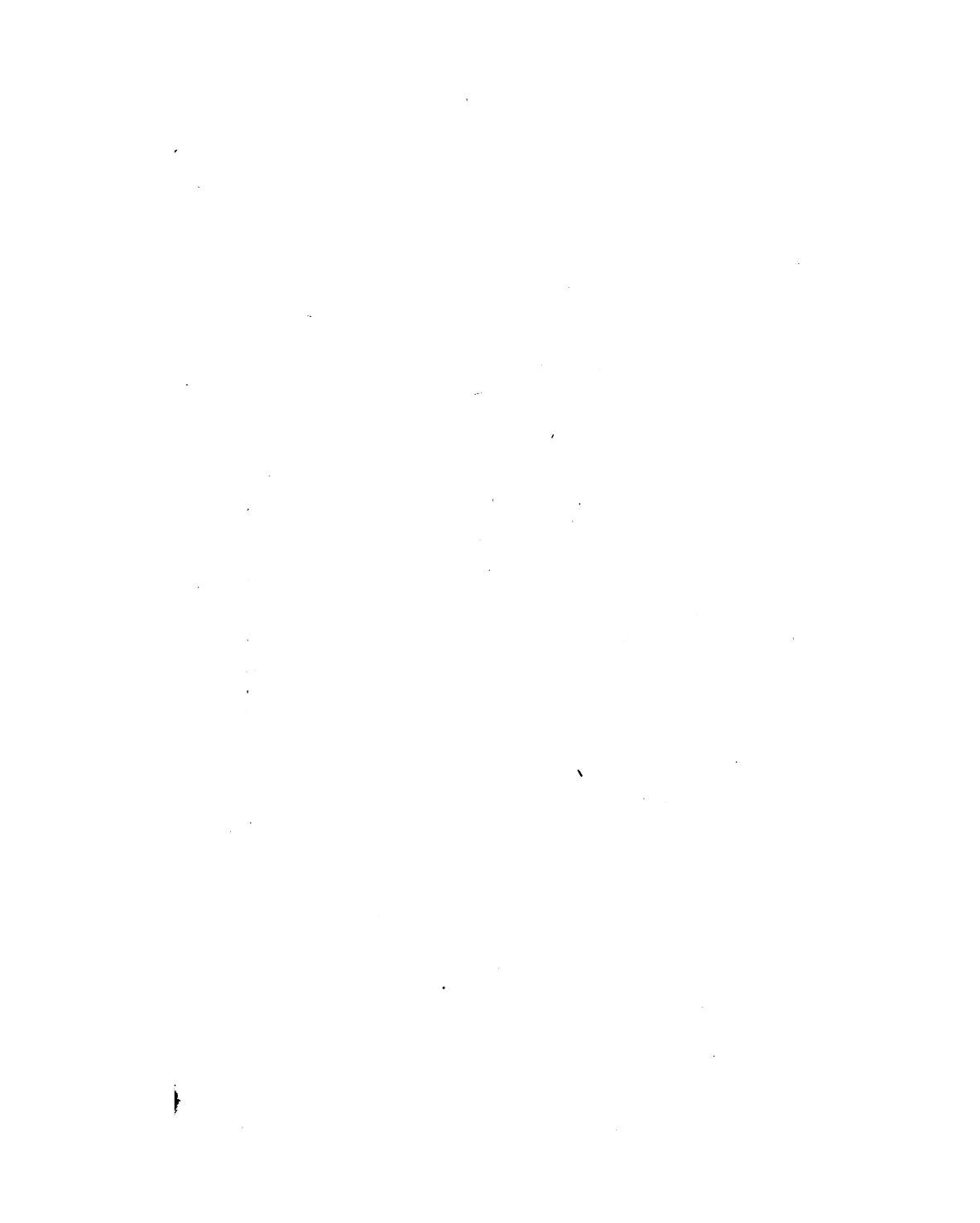
He wheeled his horse to the left and went back. Carter, turning in his saddle, watched him go. The house, or rather cottage, of the Allens was for long within view of anyone riding along the Callahra road (the Callahra road is that taken by the mail-coach from Warana to Callahra).

Some minutes later, turning in his saddle again, he saw John reach the Allens', get off his horse, and lead him up to the gate. He thrust his lip out with a shrug and a sort of suppressed smile peculiar to him. It was a new thing to him to think of young Webb in connection with Alice Allen, who, with her friend, Beatrice Humphreys, were generally held to be the prettiest girls in the district. Carter's father was an Englishman, a younger son, who had started on the career of a lawyer, when his health suddenly gave way. After a short struggle with himself, he had decided to sacrifice his professional ambition in England to the necessities, as he feared, of his very life. Out in Australia, however, it had soon become apparent to him that, to a man with a certain amount of capital, money could be made more rapidly by squatting than by anything else. (The land was not then the object of general interest that it is now, and was pretty much at the mercy of whoever could and would take it

up). Gifted with considerable energy and shrewdness, he had found little difficulty in learning his new business: the open-air life benefitted his health, and thus in a short time he found himself able to marry and settle down to as happy an existence as he conceived of in a benighted country like Australia. The general opinion about him was one that told half of admiration, half of dislike, and it was the same of his son, who resembled him both in person and disposition to quite a remarkable degree. The young bank clerk, to whom allusion has already been made in connection with the elder Webb, and who was wont to solace himself for his exile from his beloved Melbourne into (as he said) this God-forsaken hole, Warana, by making epigrammatic speeches on certain of the inhabitants, once said of the father and son, as seen riding side by side into Warana, that they looked like a couple of foxes out hunting together, and the expression had become rather current. That feeling of antagonism between rich and



Beatrice Humphreys . . . was standing on the grass-plot, straight in front of him.



poor, possessors and non-possessors, which we have seen burst out in the bitter struggle between squatters and selectors is a strong one, and more far-reaching than it seems. It was by appealing to it that the career of bush-ranging became the wonderful success which it was. The squatters are not popular. Even the people of the little townships dislike them; for, after all, it is not by the squatters but by the selectors that they are now supported: the squatters get the great bulk of their things from the capitals. The eye, then, with which Warana regarded young Carter was not very much more favourable than that with which it regarded young Webb.

‘Ach,’ said Carter to himself, as he watched John leading his horse up to the gate, ‘the lout!’

He felt almost inclined to turn back and watch him more carefully, for he had a certain interest in that cottage and its neighbour, but deciding not, turned back his face again and rode on homewards.

John meantime had reached the garden gate, and just put his hand on it, when he was made to pause by what he saw. Beatrice Humphreys, one pretty arm and hand pendent, the other holding a huge watering-pot, from the rose of which the last of the water ran in dribblets, was standing on the shaded grass-plot, straight in front of him, looking into his eyes and smiling brightly.

'Oh, *Mr Webb!*' she said, laughing outright, 'Why it's *you!* I'm so glad to see you!'

John flushed: then, perceiving Alice stepping up to Beatrice, said rather confusedly that he had come to see Mrs Allen.

The girls advanced at once, and began with their light chatter to put him at his ease, making much of him and his horse. Then, having insisted on bringing the horse in and leading him to a part of the grass-plot, where he could feed, they said, they hooked his bridle to a post, and with much

fun and amusement took John into the house to tea.

‘Well,’ he thought to himself, as he crossed the threshold, ‘I’m glad I came back rather than go half-a-mile with young Carter.’

III.

SELF-REVELATIONS.

WHEN he rode away an hour or so later from Mrs Allen's, into the grassy flowery plains, he felt what in a nature less suppressed would have been a desire to laugh and sing. He had reached one of those moments in life when a new experience bursts upon us with the light and music of a joyous revelation. He seemed to himself to be still seated in the pretty little dining-room, in full and perfect contentment with the scene there. He could have sat so for ever! He could have watched Beatrice at her work by the open rose-hedged window for ever, all the variety that was needful being supplied by the talk of Mrs Allen and Alice, and the sounds and airs of the lovely

spring day without. These two little cottages, nestling side by side in the dense mass of flowery greenery, took to him that sort of miraculous actuality with which children invest the persons and places of their fairy tales. John had never read a fairy tale in his life, but, having had abundant time for dreaming, the faculty of investing things with imaginative attributes was not dead in him. At last he was almost ready to exclaim to himself against the tyranny of this new vision. He felt something like fear. What if he were indeed to be pursued by it? What if it rose ceaselessly before him at his work, in his long rides, — everywhere, — and would give him no rest?

For such a fate he was, he soon found, not reserved. The vision faded away from him in the course of the next day, the only part of it that still had any vividness being the face of Beatrice. There were hours in which, however, this face rose before him with an intensity and insistence which

angered, and, as before, ended with almost making him afraid. The idea that he was, as we say, in love did not occur to him. He knew nothing of such an eventuality. The only love-tales he had ever heard of or read were those in the Bible, and they had not particularly impressed him. He had not quite understood them; they were far-off things which did not come within the range of his senses. It was the same with the few actual incidents of the sort, the grosser loves of any of the men and women he knew and which had reached his notice. This feeling of his, then, towards the lovely, imperious face struck him as mysterious and even weird. There were times when he felt as one feels who slowly grows aware that he is sickening with a malady. The old idea that he had had of her—of the leaving of such a girl every morning to sweet and gentle avocations about the pretty station-house, and of the returning to her every evening — was now almost impossible to him. If he had thought of it, he might,

he felt to himself, have lost his head. By a quaint childlike act of self-deception, he relegated this idea into the far-off antechambers of his mind, pretending that it did not exist, or at least that he did not know of its presence. He longed to go and see her again, but kept assuring himself that he had not the time, in order to persuade himself that he was not in reality afraid to go. He worked hard, thinking that he should thus banish this vision which was so bitter-sweet. It revenged itself by coming upon him at unexpected moments with an intensity and insistence that increased, and at last threatened in appearance in his dreams. And so, having soon found that this haunting fate was not reserved for him, he again soon found that it was, and was accordingly the more impressed with it. At last he could endure it no more. His desire, to see the house, the people,—*Her*,—was torturing him like an unappeasable hunger, at moments agonised by an unquenchable thirst. He

struggled against it with every means that he knew of, but it was too strong for him. He tried to discredit the girl in his own eyes, but ended with glorifying her and abasing himself. He told himself that he had only known her for two days in his life, nay for one afternoon, and something in him assured him that he had known her for ever. He recognised, he thought, the very look on her face, with which she would greet him a month hence, two months, a year: the very look with which she would listen to him when he told her that he wanted her and could not live without her. Then suddenly the fact struck him.

‘Why,’ he said aloud, lifting up his head with an expression half of joy, half of wonder, ‘*I love her!*’

In a moment the bare, little plank bedroom in which he was sitting seemed lit up with a wonderful light. The mystery was revealed to him: he *loved* her! What a strange elation in the thought! An elation that was yet akin to sorrow.

'I—love—her,' he repeated to himself slowly and almost reluctantly, his head fallen down again. It was a confession which had other elements in it than elation and sorrow, it had something of humiliation also. To a serious self-contained nature like his, Love presenting himself in that way as a god demanding instantaneous worship, had something bodeful about him. And yet, despite all bodefulness, the recognition of his love brought him a certain peace. It was too high and deep and broad a thing, too utter a possession of him, to seem to him to have any place with doubts and fears, not to say with the little pieces of self-consciousness which afflict the man merely attracted by fancy.

A few days after this, a few days filled with necessary work, he took a holiday and rode into Warana to the Allens'. He had no diffidence, no timidity now. He had reverence, and even something of awe for *Her*, but, for all others, men or women, he felt he had nothing but open simplicity.

Not all the Alices in the world could make him feel awkward and clumsy now! It was as if he had grown, like the Idan shepherd, to know Luna was his, and could turn quiet eyes of gentle apprisement onto all subordinate stars, his mistress' handmaidens. He did not trouble himself with the thought of whether Luna looked at things in the same way. He made no definite schemes of asking Beatrice to be his wife, or of preparing a home for her. All these, he might have told himself, were but more or less natural sequences of the original fact, the great original fact, that he loved her. It was impossible, he might have told himself, that such a love as his, the deepest emotion he had ever felt and which (so it seemed) anyone else had ever felt, should not fulfil itself.

He reached the bridge at the entry to the township, and, as he mounted it and the view of the two cottages struck him, he looked at them with the quiet smile of a pleased proprietor. Then he per-

ceived something which seemed suddenly to stop his heart from beating, and make everything in the earth stand still. It was a man with the bridle of his horse round his arm, talking at the gate with a girl—with *Her!* John's horse moved on, but John seemed at first to be struck dumb and motionless to the place where this sight first appeared to him; then to be borne on like a slow straw in the outskirts of a whirlpool, nearer and nearer to the swift and fatal descent. After a little, his keenness of vision, which had left him, returned, and he saw that the girl was, indeed, Beatrice, and that the man was none other than Carter.

‘Why,’ thought John wildly to himself, ‘why is she always in with the Allens? Why doesn’t she stop in her own home?’

Then he saw Alice appear behind her, and Carter shaking hands with them both, lifting his hat courteously, and mounting his horse. Many thoughts whirled about in John's mind, and no single one attained

as Mr Carter's. John's horse was indeed nothing but a station hack, the best of Webb's, but still in no way comparable to Carter's, which had both elegance of shape and daintiness of spirit. It was just beginning to dawn upon the girl's mind that the same comparison might perhaps be applied with the same results to the *owners* of the horses, when Alice and John made a move towards the house. Bluey (the un-euphonious name of John's piebald) was once more led to his place on the grass plot, and Mrs Allen coming out, they walked about the garden a little, and then went in for tea.

Mrs Allen, as has been remarked, was an old friend of John's mother. She was indeed one of the few friends Mrs Webb had made in the district, and they had been more or less sincerely attached to one another; but circumstances had combined to separate them. Allen, owing to bad seasons and (Webb declared) bad management, lost his station, and, in the terrible floods which

followed the last great drought, riding with a spare horse on business to a neighbouring town, was drowned. A certain coolness which had existed between the men was not subsequently made up between Webb and the widow, whom Webb looked on with personal disapproval, while Mrs Webb thought it right to ultimately give way to her husband's feelings in the matter. Mrs Allen, who at this time fortunately came into the possession of a little money from a dead relative in England, retired with her daughter to this cottage, supplementing her income by taking a few boarders. Generally one or more of the clerks at the banks (there were several branch banks in Warana) lodged with her, and indeed the brilliant young metropolitan gentleman with a taste for epigrams had but lately left her, owing to an irresistible impulse which he had to make love to Alice, who, having (as she would have said) placed her affections elsewhere, ended with finding him insufferable. Mrs Allen was a pretty old woman, with a heart,

despite all her troubles, little less young than when she had none. She was not troubled with deep feelings.

‘If, my dear,’ she used to say to her daughter or Beatrice, ‘if I felt things *long*, I should *die*!’ By which she meant that, if she felt things as acutely in the minutes which followed the first few, as she did in these, her system would be unable to support the strain. A happy dispensation of Providence, however, had put this out of the question.

It was perhaps a perception of a somewhat similar disposition in Beatrice, that had drawn the two together so much. Mrs Allen loved none but herself, and even herself to no very great degree, but her strongest feelings in this direction, such as they were, were undoubtedly bestowed, not on her own daughter, but on Beatrice. Beatrice was the youngest but one of a large family. Her parents had been successful tradespeople in Adelaide and then in Melbourne. In her childhood a rich old maiden

lady, struck with her fairy-like beauty and taking ways, had persuaded her parents to give her up, promising to educate her well and settle a moderate fortune on her. Unluckily for Beatrice her education was but half complete when her protector died suddenly of heart disease, and all hopes of concluding it, not to say of the child succeeding to a moderate fortune, were rudely dissipated by the discovery that there was no fortune, moderate or otherwise, to succeed to. Absurd speculations had left behind them nothing more convertible than debts. The Humphreys, however, did not distress themselves about the matter. Their elder children were already either well started in business or well married, and the old man, wishful of retiring, saw no hardship in still having on his hands his three youngest children, two girls and a boy. Beatrice's life at Warana had not been a happy one. Her parents left her absolutely to herself. Her mother spent some few hours of the day in attending to her house-

hold duties, and the rest in giving herself up to what was to her the most delightful thing in existence, sleep. Humphreys dawdled away the morning pottering about his garden, and for the rest of the day and night did the same as his wife. They had both, they used to say, worked hard, and now they wanted to enjoy themselves. Beatrice's eldest sister partook largely of the nature of her parents. Beatrice, as Mrs Allen said once, was not unlike a butterfly among a party of bats. Her brother, at present at school, was the only one of her family that had much in common with her, but he was just at that age which scorns the companionship of girls, and so she was cast more and more into the hands of the Allens, until at last she became really more a daughter of their house than of her own.

The subject of conversation at the little tea-party was one of great interest to the women—to wit, a new boarder. She (it was a she) had come that very morning. Mrs

Allen had opened the door, and She had taken the two rooms on the spot, her bedroom, that was, and the private sitting-room, the next to that in which they were now sitting. Alice had seen Her, but Beatrice only caught a glimpse of Her as She was some way down the road. Alice stated it as her opinion that She was 'a real lady,' and looked like a 'new chum.' Mrs Allen agreed, and said that she thought her face was very *nice*, very *nice indeed!*

'Yes,' said Alice with a sigh, 'but it looked so *sad*.'

Mrs Allen had not noticed it; which Alice, with her little dream of unrequited affections, thought natural enough.

'*I*,' cried Beatrice, looking up from her clumsy crochet-work, 'didn't *see* her face, but I don't believe she'll be able to give us any hints for our summer dresses.'

'What is her name?' asked John simply, now recovered somewhat from disturbing thoughts, and undergoing the spell of happy

unreflective peace which his unconscious mistress was casting round him.

‘Miss Hassal,’ said Mrs Allen and Alice at once—‘And she’s stopping,’ proceeded Alice—‘at the Royal,’ concluded Mrs Allen.

‘When does she come?’ asked John again.

‘On Monday,’ said Mrs Allen and Alice at once.

‘My *dear!*’ remonstrated Mrs Allen, ‘you always interrupt me! I never can get a word in edgeways! You talk like a perfect torrent!’

‘Well, *mama!*’ said Alice with resignation, I *do* think that’s fine! when you *never* let me say more than five words at a time!’

Beatrice began to laugh.

‘You two old stupid!’ she said. ‘You’ll be pulling one another’s noses presently.’

The picture conjured up struck them all as so ludicrous that they laughed in concert.

And thus it came about that John found himself at the necessary hour of parting on (what seemed to him), a sort of delightful new footing with Beatrice. He thought she

understood, although perhaps she had not expressly told herself, what was passing in his mind. His words and acts were charged so full of meaning to himself that it did not occur to him that they could be otherwise than the same to her. A little before he left, the two were alone together for a few moments, and after a pause he said simply :

‘I came to see *you*, Miss Humphreys, and I will come to see you again soon. I am very happy here.’

She put her crochet-work down onto her lap, and with a bird-like bend of her neck and poise of her pretty head, looked at him, a smile just parting her scarlet lips :

‘Yes?’ she said. ‘Then come again! Is it *very* dull at Marragong?’

‘No,’ he answered, looking down, ‘not *dull*. But it isn’t as if’ And he could not quite tell why he did not finish the sentence as he had intended to—‘as if *you* were there!’

Then Mrs Allen and Alice returned, and he rose to go, knowing that even now he

should have to ride Bluey far harder than was good for him if he wished to be in time for tea.

Mrs Allen pressed him to come and see them whenever he could.

'We're always glad to see you,' she said, running off into a voluble account of her affection for his mother and his mother's for her.

John rode away very contented with two flowers in his hat, one from Alice and one from *Her*, both precious as tangible memories of that afternoon, but one of course with a particular eclipsing halo round it, the dazzling sun by the early outlined moon!

The girls stood for a few moments in silence, watching him as he went.

'Do you like him as much as Mr Carter, Alice?' asked Beatrice, turning a little.

'Oh,' said Alice, 'Mr Carter is a *gentleman*, Beatrice!'

'Suppose,' said Beatrice, 'that they were to marry us?—me marry Mr Webb and you marry Mr Carter.'



Mrs. Allen . . . looked at her fondly.

‘No,’ answered Alice in a rather subdued tone, ‘Mr Carter would want to marry you—and Mr Webb too.’

Beatrice turned round altogether, and looked in her friend’s quiet gaze with childish surprise; then, laughing outright and clapping her hands on Alice’s cheeks, she began dancing about, saying:

‘Well, that *is* fun, that *is* fun!’

‘What’s the matter, child?’ asked Mrs Allen, who had come to the edge of the verandah for a look at John riding away into the sunset.

‘Why,’ cried Beatrice, running up and catching hold of her with smiles and laughter, ‘Alice says Mr Webb’s *in love* with me, and Mr Carter too! What *fun*!’

Mrs Allen held her and looked at her fondly, with a look and then a sigh that seemed to say: ‘I too have been one that was much sought after by young lovers, but alas! I had ultimately to choose one, and make all the others unhappy—and myself, too!’

‘And I *believe*,’ said Beatrice, with pretty solemn confidence, ‘that Alice’s *in love* with Mr Carter—and she shall have him too, for *I* don’t want him; he squints!’

‘Oh, *Beatrice!*’ cried Alice, coming up, ‘how *can* you say so!’ But it was not quite apparent to which remark of Beatrice’s she alluded.

‘And he’s *red hair!*’ persisted Beatrice.

Alice was about to protest again, when she thought better of it and kept silence, while the other two chattered together heedlessly.

IV.

BITTER SWEETNESS.

JOHN's intimacy with the Allens grew quickly. Mrs Allen was really pleased to see him, not only for his mother's sake, who had given her much help in her feckless early married days, or—in Mrs Allen's words—had been very *kind* to her, but for John's own sake. There was, too, something pleasurable to the good lady in the sight of the son of one of the richest squatters of the district as a constant visitor at her house. He belonged, as it seemed to her, to a circle in which she had herself once moved, but from which she had been compelled to descend, and his presence here now was a nice sign of this to her friends and acquaintances in Warana.

For the same reason, but in a still greater degree, she welcomed young Carter. The Carters were in one respect the first people of the district; it was recognised that they were English gentlepeople. They kept to themselves, not so much from pride as from taste. They had little or no pleasure in any intercourse with their neighbours who were all of the same species, more or less, as the Webbs. Precisely what either young Carter or young Webb wanted at her house did not trouble her. It seemed to her possible that one of them might marry her daughter or Beatrice—quite possible—and such an event would have been very pleasant to her, but she made no calculation about it. She left it to its own natural development. She put no constraint upon the girls, she said once to a neighbour who made a show of kind feeling in speaking to her on the subject, and this was the truth. She made no attempt to either throw them into the young men's company or restrain them from it. Mrs

Allen was a good deal more like an elder sister than a mother, as John had from the first perceived.

It was soon apparent to them all that, whatever might be the case with Carter, the attraction at 'the Cottage,' as it was called, for John was Beatrice. His arrangement with his father about the management of the station was working better than any of the family had thought possible. Indeed presently Webb, having been hurt by a fall from his horse which confined him for several weeks to his bed and several months to the house, John took everything into his hands, and, when his father came later on to examine, it was found that everything which the young fellow had done he had done well. An outer as well as an inner change was coming over him. He was beginning to be careful about his dress and his manners, at any rate when he went into Warana. He bought himself a good horse, by name Bob. At the same time he was laying by the bulk of his salary. In Warana he was now seen

frequently, not only at the Allens', but at the Royal, where he met those in whose talk he took interest or with whom he had business to transact. His father was growing more and more to rely on his advice, and several times sent him to conclude bargains up and down the country. In this way John enlarged the circle of his acquaintances, and began to acquire a good knowledge of everything connected with his work. Always noticing, he began to acquire, too, a good knowledge of the district. What definite schemes he had in his head for the future, he did not precisely know. The general idea, however, was so clear as to seem to him almost a predestined fact. Beatrice as his wife, and a station as his own (he made no calculation either on living with her at home, or on his father's death) were to him the natural, the inevitable outcome of things. He had not spoken to her on the subject; they were outwardly nothing but a boy and girl, a young man and a young woman, who enjoyed

an intimacy which was pleasant to both. She liked him a little for himself, a little for her manifest influence over him, a little for the variety which this intimacy brought into her life, and farther than this she did not trouble herself to look. Sometimes, he would, as she said, be *nasty—cross—disagreeable* (she said ‘narsty’ and ‘crawss’ and ‘disagreerble’), just because he knew Mr Carter had been to see them. (‘As if *she* had anything to do with it, indeed!’ she once observed, with pretty pride, tossing her head up. ‘And why should *not* he come if he liked, then?’) but she had the secret of charming away John’s ill-humour, and making him only ‘nicer’ than ever.

One afternoon he had been to tea, and then gone into the township on business. The winter afternoon was closing with mellow brilliancy as he mounted his horse at the Royal, and rode along the street homewards. As he crossed the bridge at the end of it, he rose in his stirrups, looking down the creek to the river for a glimpse of the

two cottages through the trees ; and, seeing the white roofs and front flushed with the sunset light, his heart filled with a delicious joy. He smiled to himself and even laughed. As he reached that part of the road from which the gates of the two cottages were visible, he turned to look again ; and saw a sight which literally overwhelmed him. Once before he had seen something like it, and it had stopped his heart from beating, and made everything in the earth stand still, but now it struck him as with sudden madness. The gate of Mrs Allen's was open, and a little to the left of it, sheltered from the house by the thick kangaroo acacia hedge and the garden trees, Carter with the bridle of his horse round his arm as before, was saying good-bye to Beatrice. He had her hand in his. Her face was turned down, his (so it seemed to John) peering into it. Beatrice's attitude expressed the lingering doubt and pleasure of a pretty girl to whom a man says things that are sweet. John jerked his horse up and sat staring at them,

his face working horribly. He had never actually met Carter at the Allens' yet, but it had troubled him enough to know that he came there from time to time. Now a revelation of terror and madness had rushed upon him: *Carter loved her too!* His instinct, then, had been correct from the first. All the talk of Carter's coming to the Cottage for the sake of Alice was a lie! Or was it that the liar was Carter: Carter, who pretended this, the better to deceive them all? And She—She—Beatrice! was *She*

He drove his spurs into his horse with a harsh cry, striking him with the whip with all his strength. Carter had mounted, and was moving away along the track by the houses, making for the ford lower down the river, when he heard the sounds of the furious rider and, looking back, drew rein, surprised, and even angered. Beatrice, too, saw John now, and so did a young woman who had just come to the open gate. It was Miss Hassal, the new boarder. It was all

nothing to John. As soon as he had reached Beatrice, who stood waiting for him, a little frightened, he drew up his horse fiercely, throwing him almost back onto his haunches, and leaped down. Face to face with her, however, he could for a moment say nothing. Miss Hassal, suspecting that something was wrong, stepped out through the gate and came to her. He felt like seizing the girl: strangling her, and then wandering away to the river and drowning himself.

At last:

‘What is the matter?’ asked Miss Hassal.

‘Matter?’ he cried, his tongue suddenly loosening: ‘Matter? Oh God, ask her—her—*her*! *How* did I see her a moment ago? Matter! Matter!’

Then, seized by an impulse, he leaped onto his horse again, without waiting to catch the stirrups, spurred him away back to the road, and went on at a gallop, the three—Miss Hassal, Beatrice, and Carter, —watching him. Beatrice was thoroughly frightened; she clung to her companion as

if for protection, shaking, and at last sobbing. Miss Hassal took her indoors, and Carter, who was returning, seeing them pass the gate, thought better of it, and went on across into Warana. John meantime rode madly, unconsciously intent on venting his anguish of mind in the speed of the horse which bore him. When he reached the stable he was still unappeased. Instead of fifteen miles, he could have wished to ride a hundred, and then, he thought, he could rest and sleep, and wake the next morning to reconsider the matter. He loosened Bob from saddle, bridle and cloth, and dismissed him with a side-kick into the paddock; then went striding into his bedroom, locked the door, and flung himself onto the bed. In a few minutes his anguish of mind returned to him with unabated intensity. He lay writhing, muttering, cursing, gripping the clothes with his hands. Billy, coming to tell him that tea was ready, found the door locked, and with some surprise, heard him answer that 'he did not

want any tea, he was ill.' Bessie, who in a little time came to see what was the matter, was dismissed peremptorily. At last he broke out into convulsive sobs.

'I shall go mad,' he cried, rolling over onto his face and shutting out all the light from it with his arms, 'I shall go mad! Oh, Beatrice, Beatrice, Beatrice!'

Suddenly the idea of death, of suicide, occurred to him. He could endure this torture no longer. Why should he endure it? Why should he be suffering like this? He had done no wrong!

The evening closed in. Venus shone out silver and steely in the upper roseate heaven, and the wan moon grew slowly to her radiance. The plovers down in the swamp broke the silence with their restless strident cries. He lay there on his back on the bed, looking out vacantly from the little window into the evening. He was appeased at last. The hurricane had swept away and left no other sign than the broad deep swell of skyward waters. He was thinking of his life, and



He lay on his back on the bed, looking out vacantly from the little window into the evening.

even of her, with quietness, with calm. Then he came out from the realm of thought with a sigh, and realised somewhat where he was. Afraid that he might once more return to the old anguish, he rose slowly to his feet, purposing to go into the dining-room where the others were. No; he could not bear it yet. He struck a match: lit the candle, and put it on the chair by his bedside. He looked at the three books that were upon the little shelf above it—a book on sheep-breeding, a Bible, and a prayer-book. He took down the Bible: threw himself onto the bed again, and opened at random. It was one of St Paul's Epistles. A few verses were enough to be interestless to him. He changed the place. It was the story of Hannah and Samuel, a favourite one of his mother's, and one which he knew too well to care for in a humour like this. He changed the place a second time, and began to read:

'Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as

death: jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame.

'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.'

His mind was not usually a quick one, especially in apprehending things that were not spoken. He felt that this passage was a sort of revelation of truth to him, an expression of the reality of the case, and, as such, a balsam, a relief; but he did not realise it at once. He read the passage through a second time, a third, and then, having seen that what preceded and followed it added nothing to its significance to him, stopped and considered.

'Yes,' he said to himself, 'that's true, that's true! Love strong as death—jealousy cruel as the grave—like coals of fire—a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love—many waters cannot quench love—love strong as death—jealousy cruel as the grave.'

He repeated the words to himself several times.

Yes, he was appeased at last, appeased not only for the moment but, as it seemed to him, for ever. He saw now, he thought, how it all was. He understood it all now. She did not *love* him, she only *liked* him. For him, to stand like that while another man spoke to you as *he* (Carter) did, was terrible, a crime! But for her it was not so. She did not *love* him, she only *liked* him: liked him—a little more than she liked *him*, perhaps, but still it was only *liking*, it was not *love*! A great humility came to him: the knowledge of this heart and world of love which he was laying at her feet seemed to him as an offering offered up on an altar to some unknown Being of omnipotent omniscience. He felt no humility towards *her*: his humility was to Something (although he could not have expressed it so) around, yet above and beyond her, Something of which she was but as a symbol. And yet how passion-

ately he loved the symbol! At moments, remembering that attitude of theirs, the granted hand, the face peering into the down-cast face, he would feel the lash of madness laid upon him again and, quivering utterly, would raise his face up with an agonised protest against the terror and the crime of it. But these latter moments were the rarer and the shorter.

He had little difficulty in persuading himself to go and see them—see Her—again. The feeling that dominated him would not let small thoughts have place. The next day he was free, he rode over to Warana; did what business he had to do, and came on to the Cottage. He was fortunate enough to find Beatrice outside in the road, clipping the hedge. He got off his horse and came to her directly.

‘Beatrice,’ he said, ‘Miss Humphreys, I’m sorry if I frightened you last Saturday. I was in the wrong. I didn’t understand. Will you forgive me?’

Such words, from such an one as he,

would have astonished most people. Beatrice, half-turned, the large garden-clippers in her hand, stood for a moment in silence, a little rumple in her brows, and a little doubt and pique at strife together in her pretty face.

He thought she was still unforgiving, or that she had not liked him calling her by her Christian name. (She *was* like that, perhaps.)


'Forgive me,' he said again simply and humbly, 'I didn't understand.'

'Oh yes,' she said, raising her head, with a quick, bright look. 'Well, then! . . . Well, you *did* frighten me—riding down on me like that, just like a *thunderbolt*!—But,' she added with a little laugh, 'I forgive you.'

No further notice of the incident was taken by anyone. That tea was one which, different as it was to all the others, had to him a charm of its own unsurpassed by any. This was the first time, too, that he really noticed Miss Hassal. He had seen her

before, but they had scarcely exchanged a dozen remarks. She would sit silent, listening to their talk but taking little or no share in it. To-day, however, she came and sat beside him with a sort of personal interest in her manner which he accepted without recognising and was pleased with. She was quite different, he felt, to the others; different even to Beatrice, although Beatrice, too, had something that was like her in her way of talking and moving. Miss Hassal spoke to him of his life on the station and of the work he did, asking him questions which soon showed him that she understood it all. Afterwards it occurred to him that this was strange. Wasn't she 'a new chum?' And then he reflected on one or two things she had said about station work, and recognised that they were true and even noteworthy. He had a cordial liking for her, he found, and the next time he went to the Allens' showed it with his usual simplicity. His visits there were very pleasant. 'The thunderbolt incident,' as

Miss Hassal had half-jestingly called it to Beatrice, had passed away, leaving the atmosphere all the more equably mild for its advent. This new aspect of John, his quietness, his tender humility, found much favour in his mistress' eyes. She felt like a gentle charmer that holds a bear in a chain of roses, with a far-away fear that the charm may not be able to stand much of a strain, and so must be used with tact. She had excellent tact. She was not one that cared to see how close it was prudent to sail into the wind's eye. The possibility of capsizes seemed to her eminently undesirable. And John, however on occasion he might be inclined to resent the rule of the charm, was now always reduced to submission by the sight of the pretty rose-chain, symbol of the servitude he gave himself to so completely. At home they suspected nothing. They had so little intercourse with the outer world that they might almost be said to have none. The change in John's manner was of course noticed, but the chief



cause of it was put down to the amenities of Warana 'society.'

His acquaintance with Miss Hassal grew rapidly, and an incident suddenly developed it to the pitch of intimacy. She took a fancy to riding, and consulted him about the purchase of a horse. He bought one for her, and arranged for its keep with his friend Rowe of the Royal. Then he offered to go out with her for a ride, and the offer was accepted. One ride led to another, and in this second one she told him how she had wished to have two horses, and get 'the girls' to ride, which would be so good for their health, but that they neither of them seemed to care about it. John was a little surprised at all this; for the cost of keeping a horse in the township was high, and here Miss Hassal wanted to buy another, and keep the two, and the second all for the purpose of giving the girls some pleasure! She was not poor then? About this, however, he troubled himself but little. His respect, and even admiration for her,

amounted to a confidence more or less perfect. He took her as she was, and was in his way thankful for her. He felt that she was the friend of both Beatrice and himself, a sort of elder sister to them. Beatrice, it was evident, liked her very much; liked her more than even Mrs Allen and Alice, and perhaps even himself. But Miss Hassal was not one, for a nature like his, to be jealous of; there was something about her that precluded the idea. John ended with telling her all his love for Beatrice, telling her with a sort of wonder at the fact and at the possibility of his being able to put it into words. But she understood it all so well; the little she said showed this to him.

‘I believe,’ he said, looking at her with bright eyes as she rode beside him, ‘you know more about it than *I* do!’

She smiled, gazing in front of her over the great, green plain hedged with its far circle of timber.

‘Look,’ she said, lifting her arm and

pointing with her whip, 'there's a kangaroo by that tree. What a pity you haven't got your dog, and we might have a chase.'

'Would you like it?' he asked. 'Then I'll bring Nigger in with me the next time, or . . .'

'Well,' she said, looking at him with her quiet amused smile, 'or?'

'Why,' he said, 'I thought p'raps you might care some morning to ride round with me—round the paddocks, I mean—and then we'd be sure to have a run.'

And so it was arranged for the next day.

She had said little to him in the way of advice as regards Beatrice on this occasion; but when they met for their ride round, she gave him her opinion in full.

'I believe,' she said, 'that, if you moved slowly, Beatrice would grow to the idea of marrying you; but, if you hurry, you will frighten her. She likes you, but she is rather afraid of you. She thinks of your violent feelings, and does not care to trust



The two dogs got well off: picked out their animals, and, after a fine run, killed them close together.

herself to them. I do not believe that she would ever like anyone more than she likes you,—before she had married them, at least. Afterwards, perhaps, if they were always gentle and kind to her, her liking might become love.'

John kept silence for a little. Then:

'I wish,' he said, 'you'd say that over again to me. I think it's right, but I want to have it clear in my mind.'

Love had loosened the tongue and made the dumb soul even eloquent, but he was still diffident as to his powers, and he looked forward to the slow persuading of his mistress to become his wife. Miss Hassal did as he asked her, and then a 'mob' of kangaroo coming suddenly in sight, the chase began. It was an excellent one. The two dogs, Nigger and Ben, got well off: picked out their animals and, after a fine run, killed them close together, Miss Hassal and John being up in time to see the struggle between the black kangaroo dog and the kangaroo at bay. Her pale face

was all flushed with the exhilaration of the gallop, and John, looking up at her as she sat there on her dark horse, thought that she looked more beautiful than he had ever seen any woman or thought that any woman could look.

‘It’s not a bad animal,’ he said, as he hacked off the ears, ‘but I wish we could have put up an “old man” and you’d have seen something like!’

‘What is an old man?’ she asked.

‘A full grown one,’ he answered. ‘They fight like h—— like anything!’

She laughed. His slip into and out of his vernacular amused her.

He rode back with her almost to Warana.

‘Well, Mr Webb,’ she said as they shook hands before parting, ‘I think you will manage to get Beatrice, and I’ll try all I can to help you, for I think that she’d be happy as your wife, and I know that you’d be happy as her husband.’

‘Thank you,’ he said, ‘thank you!’

‘Good-bye.’



John caught her two hands and kissed them.

‘Good-bye.’

And they parted, she to go into Warana to the stable (it did not occur to John to run the chance of being late for tea by accompanying her): he to return home with much confidence in the future.

And so, one day towards the end of the winter, his declaration of his love was made, and to his question if she would ‘marry him and be his wife,’ Beatrice answered with charming gravity:

‘Yes, Mr Webb, I will marry you, for I do like you, indeed I do! And Annie, Miss Hassal, thinks it would be good. And now, I suppose, I must always call you John.’

John caught her two hands and kissed them, and then with a sudden transport took her in his arms, pressing her to him, kissing her brow and cheeks and lips.

‘Oh Beatrice,’ he said, ‘oh Beatrice, Beatrice!—I love you more . . . more than I can say to you!’

‘Then you can’t say it to me, then!’ said Beatrice, rearranging her hair and

dress with little touches, 'You can't say it, and so what's the use of trying?'

'And I can't say either,' he answered, 'how to thank Miss Hassal.'

'Oh,' said Beatrice, with renewed gravity, 'Annie's a good fairy, and I'm never going to go away from her—never, never!'

He smiled.

'Never,' he said, 'never!'

V.

BREAKING AWAY.

JOHN had a sort of instinctive feeling that his father would be opposed to his marrying Beatrice, and he was just at present in so delightful a state that he did not care for any other element to enter into it. He did not know whether Beatrice had told Mrs Allen and Alice of their engagement, not to say her own mother, and, as no allusion was made by either her or Miss Hassal to the matter, he himself made none. Weeks grew into months, days of all but unalloyed happiness to him ; or, if he had at moments any desire for something more complete than this sweet and quiet courtship, Beatrice soon contrived to allay it. Love is wont, if starved, to be content with crumbs ; but

give him a meal and he wants a banquet. The time in which John was fully and perfectly content with sitting and watching Beatrice among the others was past. She, however, it was clear, wished for no change. She made no mystery about her preference for being alone with John, or alone with him and Annie; but she did it in such a way that neither Mrs Allen nor Alice suspected that the two were absolutely engaged to one another. What Miss Hassal thought about the matter, John could not be sure of. He could see that everything was not quite as it should be between her and Beatrice. Not that the young Englishwoman expressed this in any marked manner; it was only that, with all her quiet show of affection for Beatrice, she seemed to think that something was being done that was not as it should be. At last John spoke to her. They were alone together at the back of the garden, she picking some flowers for her rooms. He asked her if she thought Beatrice ought not to tell the Allens about

her engagement to him? Oughtn't he to tell her father of it? Oughtn't he to tell his own father of it?

'Well,' said Annie, bent down, looking at the flowers she was choosing, 'I think that perhaps, it would be as well Will you have any trouble with your father?' she asked, looking up suddenly.

'I may have,' he answered. 'But I don't mind. I'll go back and take up land.'

'Could Beatrice go with you?'

'Oh, no,' he said, 'Oh, no, I shouldn't like her to. It's all wild scrub there; she'd have to rough it. No, I'd go up first, and clear the place, and get a house built, and then she could come up p'raps'.

'How many years would it take?'

'That would depend on the boss, on my father. If he split with me and wouldn't give me anything, it might take a good time; but if he'd give me some money, I could get it done in a year or two.'

'And meantime you want Beatrice simply to stay here and wait for you?'

‘Yes,’ he said.

There was a pause.

‘Very well,’ she said. ‘Suppose you tell your father, and let us see about it.’

John went home and, after tea, happening to be alone in the dining-room with his father, told him that he had asked Beatrice Humphreys to marry him, and that she had said she would.

‘And who the ——,’ asked Webb in astonishment, ‘is Beatrice Humphreys?’

John answered that she was a great friend of the Allens. Webb at once burst out furiously :

‘So *that* was what you’ve been up to all this time, my fine gentleman,’ he shouted, ‘riding into Warana, neglecting your work, and taking your own father’s hard-earned money for nothing! Now, look here, I’ve put up with this long enough! Don’t speak another word! I won’t have it! Do you hear? If you want to go marrying any of *that* lot you shall do it for yourself, but I’ll be damned if you do it for me! They’re all a lot of

empty-headed wasteful fools, the whole family. Now, don't stand making faces at *me*,' he went on even more furiously, 'or I'll—I'll break every bone in your body! I've put up with you long enough! Get out of the room, and I don't care if you get out of the house too, and never come back into it!'

John made an effort to master himself, and answer calmly, but perceiving that it was impossible, made another effort to go out in silence, and succeeded. Outside he met Bessie, who had heard Webb's angry voice, and was coming in.

'What's the matter, John?' she asked.

John could give no articulate reply. She took his arm and led him away, for she saw that the cause of the quarrel lay with him, and was fearful lest he should return. They went round by the stables together, she soothing him and gradually learning what had taken place. It grieved her that he had not told her anything about Beatrice before, but she neither said nor showed any of this feeling to him. Her one idea was how to

help him,¹ and smooth matters generally. The first thing she had to explain to him was that of late, for months indeed, he had been very distant with them. He had not noticed it, he said, and he might have added that social amenities were of such a microscopic character at Marragong, that it was difficult to suppose his father had thought him lacking in them. Such, however, was the case; added to which it appeared that, during all these months, his father had been fretting and fuming about his constant visits to Warana, his 'dandyfying,' and the rest of it, and John had not noticed it, or, if he had noticed that something was the matter, had paid no heed to it. Now came the question of Beatrice herself, and Bessie exasperated him almost beyond bearing by the way in which she received his account of her. She looked grave, offering doubts, and at last absolutely asserting that she thought he had not acted rightly in engaging himself to a stranger so soon, and without letting any of them know anything about it. She even

hinted at the possibility of the whole thing being more or less of a trap laid by the Allens to catch him. John suddenly burst out into a furious passion ; and, fiercely cursing her, stalked away into the house, passed through the dining-room, where his father sat wrathfully trying to read his weekly newspaper, and into his own bedroom, the door of which he slammed and locked.

Webb and his son had in common the quality of obstinacy. So soon as they had taken their ply in a thing, it was almost impossible to stop them. Webb would not listen to anything which contraverted a decision of his, except in very rare moments. His wife was the only person who had had the secret of managing him by as calmly opposing him when he was wrong as supporting him when he was right. Of late years John, unconsciously working on the same principle, and by his actions conclusively showing that he knew what he was about, backed too by his father's perception of a courage and determination

equal to his own, had obtained a weight with him that was really remarkable. Now, however, the supposed neglect of his work for the last months, culminating in this love affair with 'one of the *Allens*,' as Webb scornfully put it, had destroyed all this, and Webb was in the geyser state. It was useless for Bessie to say that John had not neglected, and was not neglecting, his work. Webb's only idea of work was what his son had called nigger-driving. John, then, had been guilty of wasting his father's time, and for what? For 'dandyfying himself, and riding into Warana on a flash cob to spoon with one of the *Allens*!' It was useless for Bessie to say that he had far more often gone into Warana about business. 'That,' answered Webb, 'was all bunkum. —No,' he said, 'he would have no more of it! John should not go into Warana again. Wasn't John a paid man, and couldn't Webb make his men do as he pleased? As for this d—— (Webb's peri-

phrases for Beatrice were always brutal and often also foul), if he heard another word about her and John, he would send him off the place that hour, and be damned to them both !'

Bessie found her brother equally unmanageable on his side. He saw that his father had made up his mind about the matter, and against himself, and he thought that Bessie had done the same. All she could get from him was the promise that he would not, as he had intended, ask his father next Saturday to let him go into Warana, but ask for the Sunday or even wait a week.

On Saturday night John broke the sullen silence that had remained between them ever since the quarrel by asking leave to go into Warana in the morning. Webb curtly refused it. John rose, with difficulty mastering himself, and went into his bedroom, where he locked himself up. Later on in the evening he came out again, pale and calm, into the dining-room, where

he found the three together, and quietly asked Bessie and Billy to go out for a bit. They went out silently, Bessie casting him an appealing glance. Then after a pause he again asked his father, who had not once looked up from his newspaper, if he would let him go into Warana to-morrow, as he had something important to see to? Webb still made no answer, but John could tell what answer was meant by those frowning brows and glaring eyes, that twitching mouth, those restless fingers. Wrath overcame him.

'Alright, then,' he said slowly through his teeth. 'Thank you. I'll go!'

Webb leaped up, crunching the paper in his hands.

'You *shan't* go, you . . .' But the boiling brain could not find a word hateful enough for the stuttering lips.

'And who'll stop me?' asked John.

'I will,' shouted Webb.

'Damn you,' cried John ferociously, losing all control over himself, 'I'll . . .'

The father and son stood still, silently glaring into one another's faces, not a yard apart, like two wild beasts in the instant before the death struggle. Then, before either of them was aware of it, Bessie had re-entered and stepped between them, holding out a restraining hand to each. There was danger of her being caught and hurled out of the way by one of them or by both. They asked nothing better than to decide by sheer brute strength, which was to be the master. Casting their eyes, however, on her face, its extraordinary resemblance to that of her mother absolutely made them think for the moment that it was indeed she, risen from the dead and come between them. Short as was the time it lasted, the delusion, while it lasted, was complete. They both fell back almost stupified. She, ignorant of the cause of her sudden power, but none the less perceiving it, acted on it at once.

'Come,' she said to John, catching him by the arm, 'come, dear!'

Then, before he knew what he was about, she had got him out of the door into the open air, and closed the door behind them. But now he saw, what he took to be, the trick, and angrily resented it. She clung to him with desperation, hardily wrestling with him to prevent his return. He could almost have struck her, so as to get free; almost but not quite. Something restrained him from this, something which took its rise, not in the fact that she was his sister, but that she was a woman and that so was Beatrice. Even in the whirlwind of his wrath the thought restrained him, and at last, making him feel that his struggle with her was brutal, overcame his desire to return.

‘Let me go,’ he said, ‘I won’t go back.’

She let him go at once, and without a word he turned and stalked out into the paddock. He found Bob—caught him—slid onto his back, and galloped him into the stables. Bessie meantime had gone back again into the house to her father. As John

was saddling the horse, he became aware of someone standing at the gate of the yard, looking at him. It was Billy. The brothers had not much to do with one another, but the feeling that was between them was, under a certain amount of outward roughness, kindly enough. In the younger brother, admiration had turned it into something little short of love. He stood there, longing to do something to express his sympathy with John, but not knowing how to. John mounted his horse and rode out at the yard gate, with a nod to him. Billy drew back, and then stood watching them till they were out of sight. Even then he did not go away, but listened for the sound of the hoofs. The track swept round the end of the swamp, where the ground was so hard that the sound of wheels or hoofs could easily be distinguished from the house. Then came about a quarter of a mile where the sound was muffled, and then another part where it rang out again. Billy stood listening. The stroke of the hoofs came to him sharp and regular.

‘He’s galloping,’ he thought to himself.

The evening was a still one, a slight breeze blowing from the west, the Warana direction. The sound of the rhythmic hoofs was lost again ; then presently, caught, as it seemed, in the air, it swept up to him and passed. John was still galloping. Billy bent down with his ear close to the ground and listened intently.

‘He’ll take the short cut across the Warana paddock,’ he said to himself, ‘Now he’ll be turning off and go to leap the brush-wood fence.’

The sound, renewed again, suddenly ceased. John had left the track and was making for the highest and thickest part of the brush-wood fence. They went at it like a whirlwind, cleared it, lit on a patch of ‘boggy’ ground, and it was with a little difficulty that he kept his seat and the horse from his knees. Then he whipped him up again, riding recklessly through the scrub. The moon, freeing herself from some clouds, soared out radiantly into an open space in the sky.



They went at it like a whirlwind.

It had an exhilarating effect on him, making him for the moment forget everything but his wild ride. Then something occurred to him and he laughed.

'Riding down on me like that, just like a thunderbolt!'

He laughed again, but grimly and with a frown.

The clouds once more floated up slowly over the moon. Bob's gallop slowed to a canter, and then changed into a quick trot. They went on over the dusky plain towards some timber and a band of light on the horizon. This was the creek which ran into the river above Warana.

VI.

AN ARTIST.

It was half-past nine when John rode up to the garden gate of the Cottage. He got down : slipped the bridle over a post in the fence : shoved open the gate, and entered the garden. There were lights in the house. It was probable that they had not gone to bed. He went striding up the walk. Someone, a woman, dressed in white, was lying back in a wicker easy-chair on the verandah by the door. He came straight to her, taking it to be Miss Hassal. — Annie. It was. He stopped in front of her.

‘Well,’ she said, ‘what is the matter, Mr Webb?’

‘It’s all up,’ he answered. ‘I’ve spoken to the boss, and we’ve split.’

There was a long pause.

At last she broke it.

‘And what,’ she asked, ‘are you going to do *now*?’

Face to face with this woman, he felt diffident. His impulsive action seemed to him to lose its hue of actuality and to sink back into purposelessness. Then the true significance of it all swept upon him.

‘I must go,’ he said in a low suppressed tone, ‘I must leave her! It’s all up now. I must leave her—for years!’

Annie seemed to take a resolution.

‘Come,’ she said, ‘come in here, and tell me about it.’

She rose and went along the verandah to the next garden-window, which was open, he following her. She entered: found a box of matches on the corner of the chimney-piece: struck one, and lit a candle. John stood watching. He had not been in the room before. It was her sitting-room or studio. He felt at once that it was a room which reflected her. Even at that moment of con-

fused trouble he looked with a sort of wonder at the drawings and canvasses on the walls, at the pretty things strewn about on the tables and chairs. By the second window stood an easel with a canvas on it, draped with a light brown silk covering. It was significant of these two that not a word had ever been spoken between them of herself, of her past, present or future. Beatrice, it is true, had once told him that Miss Hassal painted beautifully, but it was not a matter that interested him either for itself or as regarded Miss Hassal. The Warana ideas of a painter were almost entirely connected with the adornment of weather-board walls. John took her as she was, and was in his way thankful for her. It never occurred to him to wonder who she was and what she was doing here?

She lit a second candle, one in a reading-lamp, the flame of which she covered with the dark shade of it; then turned to him and, with a smile and gesture, pointed him to an easy-chair, on the side of the large open fire-place

next the window. He sat down in it, she sitting down in a chair close by the middle table on which stood the reading-lamp.

‘Now,’ she said, leaning her elbow on the table and her hand against the side of her head, ‘you can tell me about it.’

John, after a short pause, with bent head and eyes on the carpet, turning his hat round in his hands, looked up at her and began his account of what had occurred. Her face was in the shadow, his in the light, for none fell upon hers from the reading-lamp, and a large china jar on the mantel-piece stood directly between her and the other candle. She watched and listened to him with interest. Having finished, he paused.

‘And now,’ she said, ‘tell me what you intend to do?’

He answered with direct simplicity, that he should ride back home again to-morrow, and tell his father that, if he would not consent to the marriage with Beatrice, they must part.

'I wonder,' she said with a smile, 'if you will put it as mildly and reasonably to him as you do to me?'

John thought he would, because he was eased of his anger, and proceeded with his exposition of his plans. If his father, as was most likely, dismissed him on the spot without a month's wages, he would come into Warana that night and arrange with Beatrice about taking up some land as soon as possible. Annie asked for further particulars. Was it so easy, then, to take up land? John launched out into his schemes of ways and means, schemes which had been slowly maturing in his mind for some time past. She saw that he knew quite well what he was about, but that the question of capital hung over him like a trouble. She spoke of it, and he answered her at once. If his father offered him any money, he should take it; he thought it was only right for a father to give a son a start in the world, especially when the son had worked as hard as he had, and for so long, without any

return. On the other hand, was it not quite possible, suggested she, that Mr Webb might not see it in this light? John thought it *was* quite possible. What, then, would he do in that case? He would borrow the money he wanted from one of the wool-brokers or station-agents. The wool-brokers and station-agents, he explained, had most of the stations in their hands now, as so many of the squatters had been 'broke' by the last big drought.

'You said once,' she remarked, 'that you would want a thousand pounds or thereabout. Now I would be pleased if you would let me lend it you.'

He was surprised.

'You must not think,' she added, smiling at him, 'that my lending it you would inconvenience me, for it would not. And, as I say, it would please me to think I could be of any help to you and Beatrice. I think it would be a great pity if you did not marry her soon. I do not believe in long engagements.'

John still remained silent, with his head bent, and his eyes on the floor, considering.

She had always a calming and clearing effect on him: all that was simple and sincere in her claimed of him all that was sincere and simple in himself, and was not denied. He could see, quite well, that she meant exactly what she said, and he had no idea of the possibility of her ever regarding the matter differently to as she did now.

‘I’ll tell you,’ he said, looking up at her, ‘what I’ll do. I’ll borrow it off you, if you’ll let me pay you a regular per-cent. on it till I can give it you back again.’

‘Very well, I agree. Suppose then, you pay me five per cent.—’

‘No,’ he answered, with a shake of his head, ‘I must give you more than that; there’s the risk.’

‘I do not wish for more,’ she said simply. ‘Let five per cent. do. Now what I want to know is, how soon, with this, would you be able to marry Beatrice?’

‘Pretty soon!—in a year, perhaps. I

could have things ready for her in a year.'

Annie kept silence.

'I told you,' he proceeded, 'I wouldn't take her up there to rough it.'

'And do you not think,' she asked, looking up at him in turn, 'that as soon as you have a house built, she could come up to you? I don't believe a little roughing it would do her any harm. And,' she added, 'if you would care for it, I should be pleased to come up, too, for a little—if I could be of any use. I should like to see the bush again very much.'

John, however, had thought the matter out, and was not to be shaken in his conclusion. His face brightened somewhat at her idea of her coming up with Beatrice; but this was only an additional reason for his determination of having a nice house for them to come up to—as nice a house, that is, as he was capable of preparing for them. She made no further attempt to persuade him.

'Well,' she said, rising, 'you had better

go back home now, and arrange about bringing your things into Warana to-morrow.' She went to a desk that was standing on a little table between the two windows: unlocked and took out of it a cheque book. He stood watching her as she filled up a cheque.

'You may as well have this at once,' she said, 'for the less time that is lost the better. I can get you the bulk of the money in about a week, I think.'

He took it from her with thanks.

'I find,' she said, with a slight smile, 'that you Australians act slowly. You have so much time on your hands up on your stations, that you never care to do a thing any quicker than at a saunter.' She stopped, and seemed thinking.

'Ah!' she said, turning and looking at him, 'I should like to show you something before you go.'

She stepped to the chimney-piece for the candle, and came with it to the draped easel, the covering of which she removed. She drew back for him to approach and look,

him ; his brows contracted still more, his lips tightened, his eyes flashed.

‘Don’t touch it,’ she said, smiling. ‘You must not put your fist through it, Mr Webb ; it is only canvas and paint.’

He turned up his face to her with a sort of agony.

‘*Love strong as death,*’ he said, ‘*jealousy cruel as the grave. . . Love strong as death, jealousy cruel as the grave.*’

‘Would you like to see Beatrice before you go?’ she asked, ‘I might go in and get her.’

‘No,’ he answered in the same soft, half dreamy tone, ‘not to-night. I’ll go home.’

And, having again thanked her simply for lending him the money, he shook hands with her, and went out of the window and along the verandah. She stood and watched him as far as the gate, staying a little to listen to the sounds of the horse’s hoofs on the dry, grassless earth, as he rode away. The moon was hidden in the

down on the bed again, looking at her friend's pretty face and blinking eyes. The sight of her was indeed charming. Her ruffled hair and the unbuttoned nightdress showing her throat and the first faint lines of her maiden breasts, together with the look of dreamy languor in her eyes awakened from a delicious dream, gave her just that touch of human spirituality which, as the other thought, was wanting to change her from a pretty sprite into a lovely woman.

'John has just been here,' Annie said, still looking at her, 'and he has quarrelled with his father.'

'Well?' said Beatrice, with a touch of pettishness.

'He is going to leave as soon as possible, and take up some land farther back.'

'Has he got any money?'

'He has a thousand pounds, which (so he tells me) is enough.'

There was a silence, neither looking at the other.

At last Beatrice heaved a sigh.

'You want me to marry him,' she said, 'that's it. You want to get rid of me. I know,' and she nodded her head.

'I think,' said Annie, 'that the sooner you marry him the better. He is afraid of your having to rough it a little, and doesn't want you to join him for at least a year, and he wants me to come up with you, but I think we had better go up sooner.'

'I don't love anyone but *you*! I wish I could marry *you*!'

Annie looked at her askance, a look with a touch of evil in it.

'Now,' she said, 'I want you to agree to this. You will do as he asks you, Beatrice?'

'I will do as you tell me,' she said, 'you know I will.' And she took Annie's passive hand in her two hands and drew it to her. Annie was drawn also. Their eyes met, gazing into one another, and then their lips in a sweet passionate kiss.

When Annie reached her own window again, she paused for a moment to look out through a break in the trees to where, on the far side of the plain, a suppressed steely glow was harbingering the dawn. She was wearied, not jaded or disgusted, but simply wearied. Nothing everywhere, but Nature and these two houses which seemed sunk into it; not a creature to be seen, not a sound to be heard! John Webb, meanwhile, was lying tossing angrily in his bed, most probably, facing the problem of his troubles, and unconscious of the chief of them all. Was it not always so? Life is made up of dreams, false hopes and false fears, and the sum of them is death. But—

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

‘Peace,’ she whispered to herself, the tears rising to her eyes, the sob from her heart, with the thought of one whose memory never left her long:

'Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life.'

She stood, silently looking out across the
plain into the horizon sky where the dawn
was slowly breaking.

VII.

GIRLS' HEARTS.

WEBB, as Annie anticipated, had not the least idea of giving his son any more money than his wages up to the day on which they had quarrelled. He was not, however, a man to sulk; his manner to him when they parted was neither more nor less cordial than it had always been. The two brothers came into Warana together, John riding Bob, and Billy with the spring-cart and 'things.' John's parting with Bessie had been, on his part, the same as his father's with him. He had not got over the idea that she had not said and done what she might have in this matter, and, moreover, he had not much real care for her, only the same kindly feeling at bottom which he had

for his brother. To her this breaking up of the family seemed very cruel. She had a love, quiet but deep, for them all. She knew that John would be a great loss to his father, however little they either of them seemed to think of it now ; and John, she thought, was acting wrongly. It was useless, she knew, to speak of it ; that would only make matters worse. It was equally useless to speak of Beatrice Humphreys. She could only hope that things would come right in the end. Perhaps presently he might get a place as manager on some station, and, after a year or so of it, give it up and quietly return home. She could not tell if her father would have an overseer. The work of the station was too much for him, and yet, as likely as not, he would try to do it. The only thing she had asked of John was, that he would write to her, and this, at her repeated request, he had agreed to, with the remark that she knew he *couldn't* write !

As the brothers went on together silently,

John cast his mind back over all this and much more beside, and felt a certain amount of sadness at leaving the old home. But this feeling did not last long. He took to considering his plans about the land and the coming up to him of Beatrice and Miss Hassal—Annie, and presently found himself filled with encouragement. Billy had little he cared to express—only his sympathy—and as this could best be expressed indirectly, the little he said referred to the details of his brother's stay in Warana. They parted at the Royal with scarcely a salute, and Billy drove the spring-cart back, thinking how long it would be before he too could leave home and go out into the world 'on his own hook?'

John arranged with Rowe about keeping his 'things' at the hotel and himself staying there for several weeks, and even did a little business, as he called it, within the first few hours. In the afternoon he went for tea to the Allens'. Nothing of what had happened had, he could see, been told

to anyone but Beatrice. She indeed behaved to him in a quietly affectionate manner that at first almost overcame him. He could face all his troubles without either fear or depression, but a few kind looks, words and acts from her brought the tears into his eyes and made him ready to sob. Annie asked him to come into her studio, and Beatrice went with them. There, sitting in the seat in which he had sat last night, he entered into some of the particulars of his schemes. He addressed himself to Annie, although Beatrice sat by, listening apparently with interest. Then she rose and went out.

‘Now,’ said Annie, ‘since you will be here for at least a fortnight, I will tell you what I will do. I will paint your portrait; and so you can come as often as you please and sit in here with Beatrice and me.’

‘Thank you,’ he said with a little hesitation.

‘Well,’ she asked, with her intelligent

smile, 'what is it? Why do you hesitate?'

He turned his eyes to her.

'Did *he*,' he said, '*he*—Carter—come and sit in here like that?'

'Yes; Mr Carter came and sat in here like that.'

'And she—she—Beatrice—?' He could not bring himself to complete the question.

'Beatrice was here sometimes,' Annie answered, 'but more often it was Alice, or I was alone.'

He turned himself away for a moment and then back again, saying:

'Very well, I'll come!'

The next day he arrived, as she had asked him, before tea and had a sitting. He had little news to give. Beatrice sat in the easy-chair next the window, sewing. She was pleased with the charcoal drawing which was soon blocked in, Annie working quickly.

'It's just like him,' said Beatrice, standing and looking at it; then, turning back

to Annie, who was behind her, added with a smile :

‘Just like him when he’s going to be black, and angry, and *crawss*, and *disagreerble*!’

John surveyed it with astonished wonder, till Beatrice took it and, pulling him in front of a mirror, held it up and said :

‘Now look at the two Johns! Which is the most like?’

The resemblance was indeed striking.

‘And do you think,’ he asked, ‘it’ll be as like when it’s painted?’

‘Oh, you *goose*!’ cried Beatrice. ‘It’ll be *alive* then. It’s only a *ghost* now.’

The days passed on, and John’s negotiations also. At last he came to the girls with the news that he thought he saw his way clearly to the land, and that he should go down to Melbourne at once to arrange for what he might want. Melbourne was better than Sydney. Not a word, he noticed, was said of telling the Allens, not to say the Humphreys, about his engage-

ment with Beatrice, but this was as nothing to him. If Miss Hassal kept silence about it, then it was alright. He was to go away to-morrow. Just after saying good-bye, he remarked that the selection that would be next to his belonged to the Carters.

‘They never go up there,’ he said, looking quietly at Beatrice, ‘or very seldom, one of them. It’s run by young Graham, a Warana chap.’

Then he said good-bye again to the two girls (they were in the studio), shaking hands with them, and turned to go.

‘Won’t you give her a kiss?’ asked Annie, with a smile.

John, gazing at Beatrice, his face irradiated with the wonderful light of love, went to her, and, putting his hands on her shoulders, bent down and kissed her.

‘And now,’ said Annie, ‘you two must stand hand-in-hand together in front of the two pictures, and look at them. It is my fancy.’

The two canvasses stood side by side on

the mantel-piece. John and Beatrice stood side by side and hand-in-hand opposite them, each opposite their own portrait, but both looking at that of Beatrice, while Annie stood behind them, looking now at them and now at the two canvasses.

There was a silence for a few moments.

Beatrice broke it :

‘ Yes,’ she said prettily, with upraised finger, ‘ that’s him when he’s going to be a *thunderbolt* !’

Annie laughed and then John.

‘ Yes,’ he said, ‘ that’s the thunderbolt.’

And on this they parted.

The business which John had to transact in Melbourne was concluded with celerity and success. All his intelligence and experience were brought into play, and in a manner which was in itself a pleasure to him. He felt at times almost elated with his mastery over the realisation of his schemes, whether generally or in particulars; felt elation, as it were, on behalf of his Beatrice. It was all for her ! Every week

or so he had a letter from either her or Miss Hassal, and he was quite happy. Melbourne delighted him. His occupation threw him into contact with some men of intelligence in his own particular department, and he found out several books which he had not heard of before, and became the possessor of several which he had noted in the last few years as worth getting. To all those who met him at this time, and who had the wits requisite for knowing him, he presented himself in the same light. He was slow in beginning things, circling round, as it were, till he saw what he wanted to do, but the moment he saw it, would sweep down with swift surety. The very atmosphere of the town had an enlivening effect on him. At times he almost thought of giving up his schemes of a life in the bush, and taking to some business here; he was sure he would have been successful. But affairs in hand were too matured now to be changed in that way. He had for so long been gathering in facts and ideas, all of which tended in one definite

direction, that he felt it was impossible to give them up until that direction had been taken and its object won. How could he wheel off from his quarry, when he was half-way down to it? It was against the very essence of his nature. And yet he could not altogether divest himself of the feeling that his true place was down here in the town, where men's thoughts and words and acts partook of that nervous energy which is the real propulsion of things. There was living at that time in Melbourne a man of remarkable talent, Hawkesbury, a poet. Driven out of England by the restless promptings of his genius, he had come to Australia and striven to ease himself in the freer and healthier outburst of the colonial life. He had not been successful. His financial affairs, not attended to, had become embarrassed. An element of bitterness and disgust with life had entered into him, but his deep poet's perception of the inner reality of things, added to the natural spontaneity of his disposition, made it im-

possible for him not to do justice, as far as he could, to everyone. He met John quite by chance in the last week of his stay in Melbourne, and they would both have liked to see more of one another. They had much in common. The acquaintance, short as it was, could have been called an intimacy. They, who were usually so reticent (with the exception of Miss Hassal, John had never spoken of himself to anyone) more or less unbosomed themselves to one another. Hawkesbury read some of his poems to John, who found in their bold rush and ring of passionate sincerity, an expression of things which he had often felt in himself as inexpressible. In his turn he told his friend of his schemes, and even of Beatrice. From this time forward they both felt that a new individuality had entered into their lonely lives. They planned to meet one another again, and in quiet certainty of each other, parted.

‘Put Webb on the rails,’ said Hawkesbury a little later, speaking of him to a friend who

had once met him, 'put him on the rails, and he will run, if needs be, to heaven or—the other place!'

The friend, who was of a lucid turn of mind, would have wished to qualify this judgment, but the poet insisted with eagerness. Webb, he said, was capable of working through anything he set his hand to, and, if only a great chance was presented to him, he would seize and achieve it.

John reached Warana in the evening, and went straight to the Royal. He had so much to see to that he could only get up to the Cottage for an hour or so on the next day, and on almost all those which followed, before he had himself to go up country. He saw and heard nothing of his own family; no one, so far as he was aware, knew anything of the rupture. Not that he cared if they did, but, as he cared equally little if they did not, he said nothing of it. He busied himself in all the details of his business with unflagging interest. To Beatrice, and even to Annie, he seemed

almost like a new man. Their little nickname of him, 'Thunderbolt,' received a certain piquancy from its present inapplicability. Beatrice was more moved than her friend thought possible for her. That serene certitude of victory which he felt, sat on his countenance, and, when to it was added the wonderful light of love, it seemed to Annie at times that he was like some young god, whose sudden appearance by our side, eclipses our light as the sun's does the candle's. There were indeed hours in which she, profound observer of all things human and natural, patient and passionate portrayer of them in her arts of brush and pen (for she was also a poet) felt herself dwarfed by him, and, as it were, stood below him with upward reverent gaze.

The hour for the final parting grew close. Beatrice was restless, and for once Annie could not, she thought, altogether divine the real drifts of the currents of this charming little soul. The Allens (as, of course, all Warana) knew that he was going into the

back blocks to take up land, and Mrs Allen was a little curious about the actual state of affairs between him and Beatrice. The Humphreys, too, had an inkling of there being something of the amatory sort in the air in connexion with both young Carter and young Webb, but it was not in their nature to trouble about it. Neighbours, coming to see them, would attempt to rouse their fears by stories of the frequency of the visits of the young men, and still more of the abnormal hours of some of these visits, and Mrs Humphreys once made a sort of effort to speak to Beatrice on the subject, but at once gave it up on being met with a petulant denial. Mrs Humphreys believed that in love affairs girls and boys were best left alone, and so did Mrs Allen, and so do many other good souls whose belief is supported by a natural indolence. There could indeed, in this case, be no question of the eligibility of the young men or of the propriety of the girls; so what was the good, asked the one mother of the other on the

only occasion when the matter was discussed between them, of bothering about it? Clearly none, and therefore things were let alone to proceed as they pleased. Alice, too, influenced her mother here. Now that Beatrice and John were more ostensibly chosen out by each other, the girl's hopes about Carter rose, and she had less scruple in making attempts to throw him and herself together. And Carter seemed to fall in with this. There had been little love-passages between them. If he had not absolutely kissed her, he had done as much. Their hands had found one another touching, and had not moved. Sitting side by side at the table after tea, looking at a book he had brought, their knees touched, and, having moved once and again touched, remained so. Then one afternoon in the studio, in an interval of the portrait-painting, when Miss Hassal had gone into her bedroom for something, they were left standing together in the window, she holding some sketches, and he looking over her shoulder. Presently

she found herself leaning against him, and with a sudden feeling of utter childlike self-abandonment, gave herself up, as it were, closing her eyes and smiling at the sweet, rapture of it. The girl was intoxicated with love, and he, feeling her like a harp, touched now this string and now that, listening with an amused and cynical pleasure to the notes that sprung tremulously into being. Alice was blinded. The man she loved had reached the godlike stage in which words and acts are, as becomes an immortal, infallible. Her life was growing into a delicious flower-scented dream. Sleep was an ambrosial delight that reached out over almost all the hours of waking. He was so much with her in her happy thoughts, that it was only by the comparison of the glory of the sunshine with the grace of the moonlight, that she could understand the difference between his presence and absence. She seemed like a new girl. All her loquacity had left her. Conversation between her mother and her had used to be talking

matches, the winner of which was she who could talk the most in the given time. Now Mrs Allen had it all her own way, and, as Carter once put it to his friend, jabbered infernally. Alice began to have a certain pity for such a person, and indeed for all and every person not blessed with love revelations. There was a sort of tacit understanding arising between her and (as she would whisper to herself) Michael. This little momentary pettish gibe of his at her mother was an instance of it. She found herself wishing for a long life, in order that she might return often to this magical spring which had suddenly arisen in her life, and drink, and drink,—not her fill (for that would be impossible), but a great deal, a great deal! She had no care to confide all this to anyone, and yet, like a true chatterer, she had never before kept a secret to herself. ‘Girls, born and tossed into the frothy whirlpool of everyday experience, are wont to express themselves in verbiage, keeping however in the background of their souls

a little love dream which, if it is realised, will turn the verbiage into actual speech, and give us a hope that the earth has gained a human soul. But sometimes the love dream is realised too slightly or too late, and then, having been enjoyed and even sickened of, the tongue works back again into a gabbling machine and, instead of a human soul, the earth gains a bladder with a shower of peas in it.' Thus Annie, with a touch of spleen, writing nonchalant and oblique generalities in her note-book.

No one else noticed anything. Mrs Allen, it is true, who thought that if people did not (as Carter said) jabber, they must be ill, once interrogated Alice on the subject, but was easily satisfied, being, indeed, only too happy to hear herself discourse uninterruptedly.

The hour for the final parting grew close, and Beatrice's restlessness seemed only to increase. Annie intended that the two should have their parting to themselves, and so on the last afternoon, a few hours before

John would have to go (his 'retinue' as she had called it, had started already, and he would have to ride to catch it up, ready for proceeding again at daybreak—a thing which John would not have done, if he had not had full confidence in his man, Scott, a steady-going, stuttering, young bushman,)—she left them alone, and went into her bedroom where she took a book and lay down on the bed to read. Beatrice would have preferred it otherwise, and so also would John, for, brave and certain as he felt, the absolute parting from her seemed to almost unman him. He struggled for self-control, standing gazing at her with wistful longing as she sat, her hands in her lap, her eyes cast down, her face expressive of nothing save distress. Then, with a sudden ungovernable impulse, he caught her up in his arms, straining her to him, stammering her name and wild words of love. Then, as suddenly bending back from her, looking in her face, he said pitifully :

‘O Beatrice, you *will* love me, you *will* love me—a *little!*’

She raised her eyes and looked at him quietly.

‘Yes, John,’ she said, ‘I will marry you when you want me.’

He thought that she was signifying to him her readiness to go with him at once and take all the chances of discomfort that might come. The thought overwhelmed him. A vision of the love which prompted it rose up before him. He strained her to him again, lavishing uncouth, spasmodic caresses upon her, and then, as before, suddenly stopped, muttering to himself:

‘I shall go mad, I shall go mad!’ And loosing her, strode to the bedroom door, and knocked.

‘What is it?’ Annie said, opening it and facing him, the book in her hand.

‘I must go,’ he said in a strange voice which did not seem his own. ‘Good-bye. God bless you!’

He caught her hands in his, pressing them,

crushing the one against the book till it pained her, and turned quickly to go. As he reached the window she called to him :

‘You have forgotten your hat. It is there on the chair by the door. And don’t forget to say good-bye to Mrs Allen and Alice.’

He stood still for a moment, as if not realising what she had said ; then took up his hat and, with it pressed tight in his hand, gave her one look, and with another, long, lingering, unutterable, at Beatrice, who sat with the same helpless, quiet expression on her face, went out through the window into the verandah, and they could hear his quick firm footstep passing down it.

Annie, putting down her book, came to Beatrice, and knelt in front of her, looking up into her face. But the girl sat silently with the same expression, gazing dreamily through the open window. Then she heaved a sigh, as if returning to her realisation of things, and put her hands up to her

hair as if to re-arrange it and then to her dress.

At last :

‘Is he *gone?*’ she asked, looking at Annie.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘he is gone.’

‘Oh,’ said Beatrice with another sigh but less deep, ‘I am *glad.*’

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

PART II.

I.

TOIL AND TROUBLE.

JOHN had not found it necessary to go first alone to survey the piece of land which he had now 'taken up.' More than a year before, happening to be within reach of a part of the country of which he had had a good account from a reliable acquaintance, he had ridden over most of it. When he returned home, he attempted to persuade his father to take it up at once, as he was sure it could not remain long unoccupied. The land was now indeed being sought after everywhere. Not so long ago Victorians, passing into the Riverina, would speak of it as country all but unexplored. Webb in his

time had been one of the first pioneers. Now he found himself surrounded on all sides and with a railway within fifty miles of him. The land had risen in value proportionately with the advance of civilisation, and the competition for it, thanks to new and more democratic legislation, was very keen. The squatters had had to pay large prices to purchase their new stations, and Webb, feeling his strength failing him a little and calculating on himself alone, would have nothing to do with occupying more. He intended that his eldest son should do so, if he pleased, but this was to be later when Billy was more ready to take his brother's place at home.

John, as soon as he arrived at his selection, found himself faced with other difficulties besides those which he had bargained for. The Carters had taken up a tract close to his, and had intended to complete what would have been a fine large run by the addition of what was now his selection. They had come to look upon it almost as

their own, and it was an oversight which the father bitterly resented against the son that it had been let slip through their fingers. The truth was that, owing to the late bad seasons and large pastoral undertakings further north in New South Wales, and in Queensland, they found themselves just at that moment rather pressed for money. Moreover they were on such easy and confidential terms with certain influential members of the Government, that they believed it was a sort of understood thing at 'the office' that this particular piece, although not absolutely allotted to them, was theirs, and so the news that they had lost it was a rude surprise. It was to the son that the negotiations in this matter had been entrusted, and his father's resentment against him was great. They at once wrote both to the certain influential members of Government, whose names had figured more than once in Mr Carter's cheque-book, and to Graham, a Warana man and slight acquaintance of John's, and who was, as he

had informed Annie, manager of the Carters' station up there. Graham, accordingly, did everything he could to annoy John in his settlement, and once or twice there was a danger of an appeal to force between the two parties. John was completely given up to fencing in his land, and digging tanks in the places that were most eligible and would best suit his proposed division into paddocks. Meantime the stock which he had brought up with him was being shepherded, and, (such was the hostility of Graham and his men), John was growing to believe that there was nothing at which they would stick to harm him. There was trouble on every hand and even danger. Hard as he worked during the day, he found it necessary to spend most of his night in watching and patrolling. More than once his wire fences were cut. Some of his sheep died, killed, as he believed, by poisoned water, but how the poison came into his tanks he could only explain by the supposition of something like an absolute conspiracy to

ruin him. The thought lashed him into fury. He was beginning, too, to distrust his men. They were more discontented and lazy than he could account for. First one and then another left him on, as he considered, little or no provocation, and he learned that Graham was holding out offers of higher wages. Once or twice he even suspected his shepherds of deliberate negligence. He began to have a feeling of individual isolation, of being the object of a certain point of view to everyone—a view clearly of distrust and even dislike, but the absolute cause of which he could not discover. He was at times inclined to be imperious, but, as a general rule, he worked his men considerably, urging them to do their best rather by his own example than by anything else. Now, however, finding them sullen, his evil temper blazed out. His stock of patience was small if he believed that he had to deal with deliberate sloth or hostility. He had outbursts of wrath, in which he swore at them

and once even threatened to strike. Things went from bad to worse. On every side rose a sullen tide of opposition. His man Scott was the only one he had now absolute confidence in, and even Scott did not seem to him to be doing all that the crisis demanded. At first he had written to Beatrice or Annie at least every fortnight, and contrived to get the letter to the nearest postal station twenty miles off. So far there had been but little variety in the letters, as little as there was in their answers, which he devoured so eagerly, and which were such a consolation to him. But now in his more and more hasty notes (so Annie thought to herself), clouds began to rise, and distant thunder muttered low on the horizon. Finally, in a remarkable out-burst to her, he revealed enough of the real state of affairs to enable her to more or less divine the rest. He spoke of impediments he had to encounter; he had had troubles with the blacks lately, and the dingoes had come down in large numbers. The complaint was,

as it seemed, such a strange one for a man like him to make, that it at once occurred to her that here was a case of the least trouble put to express the greatest. There was a touch of discouragement in the whole tone of it. A month passed before they received further news, while she felt sure that something momentous was going on up there; clouds do not rise and thunder mutter in skies like these without some result. This last letter disquieted her. Happening to receive it when Beatrice was away for a few days, she made no mention of it on her friend's return, and the girl did not seem to think of asking if anything had come from John in her absence. A few days later a letter arrived for her. He had the chance of sending it, he said, and of course took it. It was one of the usual sort. Most readers would have called it cold, and, as far as the writer knew how, formal. What Beatrice herself thought of it did not appear, but to Annie it gave a new insight into the possibility of concentrating into a string of

conventional phrases an intensity of passion that was at white heat. This indeed had been a new aspect to her of her 'Thunder-bolt.' Another month passed, and another, and no further communication came from him. Beatrice was not troubled by this, because she knew how slow and erratic the post is of necessity in the parts not yet opened up; indeed she had been surprised that John had succeeded in sending them as many letters as he had. As a matter of fact, the one thing he had found difficult of justification to himself was the hard riding he had from time to time given his horses, in order to get his letters sent, and this at a time when his absolute presence on the run was so much needed. That he had in this way robbed himself of the few hours he might have had for rest and sleep, seemed a little thing to him, but the other two facts were something of a trouble. He had a feeling of responsibility in all that went beyond himself. He never forgot that this was a venture, and a venture with a con-

siderable amount of risk in it, and that it was being carried on with the money of a friend. Then another letter came from him to Annie. She received it with a feeling that it would contain a meagre account of his misfortune, and her feeling was correct. The letter contained a short abstract of what immediately follows :—Graham had accused him some time ago of stealing his sheep, and had been answered by a promise of a thrashing if he ever came into the run again, not to say to John himself with information of this sort. Shortly afterwards young Carter himself arrived, and one day rode over to the hut. There was no explosion of anger on either side. Carter was determinedly self-possessed and even polite. Sheep, he said, had been stolen from his paddocks, and his overseer had informed him that they had been taken by John's men. John at once denied it. The sheep, Carter proceeded, were at present in hiding in the bush at the back of the run, ready to be passed on into some of the blocks which

so, John met him half way by agreeing to put the man to the proof at once. Bob was standing saddled in the stockyard. John mounted him, and then rode silently with the other to the nearest part of the boundary of the run, where Graham was perceived sitting on a felled tree, smoking a pipe, with his horse feeding near. Carter rode forward to meet him, passing through a gate a little to the right, and they presently returned to John, who had drawn up, and was awaiting them. Not a word was now exchanged except between Graham and Carter, the manager merely pointing out the direction he wished them to take. They rode on till they reached the boundary again. The fences here were in course of construction. They passed several splitters preparing posts, who stopped from their work to look at them, and, as John thought afterwards, in a peculiar manner. The scrub all about was very dense, and required careful riding. Another four or five miles further on was a small plain, or—when compared with the

surrounding bush—it might be called only an opening, dotted with trees. The sheep, Graham said, were a little past the far edge of it, so they had better ride round, for fear of being seen. They turned to the right, therefore, and skirted the opening. It was now past mid-day, the sun pouring down its overpowering light and heat through the cloudless and windless sky. John was beginning to feel that in some way or other he was being fooled. The feeling grew, and at last became conviction enough to prompt him to speak.

‘I’m not going any further,’ he said frowning, and drew up his horse.

Carter, who was riding just in front of him, heard him, and drew up also, turning his head over his shoulder with his amused look. But the lighter look was quickly shaded with one of annoyance and then of evilness.

‘Ah?’ he said, wheeling round and regarding John with closing lips, and depressed eyebrows, but as sardonically polite as ever.

‘So you think Mr Webb you have gone far enough to be sure that the sheep are found?’

John was not in one of his quick moods, and so did not catch much more than the general drift of the words, namely, that Carter was sneering at him for not going on.

‘I’m going no further,’ he said. ‘I’ve stolen no sheep of yours, or any man’s. If we’re on a fool’s errand, then I’m full up of it, and you may go yourself.’

Carter’s horse, irritated by the slow swarming flies, swerved forward a little.

‘You see that tree out there?’ he said, pointing with his whip through the scrub to a tall, dead, white, barkless gum some way further along the opening. ‘Just by there we shall meet some of my men ready to help us in our fool’s errand. We had counted on you being with us, Mr Webb.’

John’s doubt of it all recurred to him, but the original considerations that had

made him come, backed by this new proof of the reality of the thing, at last persuaded him to proceed. They rode forward again in silence, Graham first, then Carter, and then John, till they came opposite the big dead gum tree. Five or six riders, two or three of whom were ostentatiously armed, were awaiting them there. After a few words of quiet converse between Carter, Graham and two of them, the whole party went on together once more. The opening was rounded, and the spot reached, close to which, as Graham said, the sheep were to be found. They advanced carefully, spreading out in a large semi-circle, and, presently, John who was riding between Carter and Graham, caught sight of a few sheep standing close together under a tree, 'camped' for the mid-day heat. There were, he thought, more with them; they had that look. The next instant a shout was heard to the right, and was answered by shouts all along the line and a general quick movement forward. When Carter, John, and

Graham rode up to the place where they had seen the sheep, a flock of several hundred was discovered huddled up in the middle of a small clearing just beyond, and two men, who had left John only the day before, were standing prisoners to two of Carter's men. A shaggy lurcher crouched at the feet of one of the prisoners. The thieves had been completely surprised and cut off.

Carter gave one low laugh to himself, and turned to John.

'You will scarcely contest,' he said, 'that those men are yours, and that these sheep are mine?'

John answered nothing.

'I need trouble you no further,' said Carter again. 'These men, of course, must be lodged safely; but, with you, this is I suppose, unnecessary. You, too, I expect, would prefer the matter to be set at rest as soon as possible?'

'Do you mean,' asked John, looking up, 'you'll prosecute me?'

'I am afraid so,' answered Carter. 'You



A flock of several hundred was discovered . . . and two men . . . were standing prisoners.

will agree with me, that appearances certainly warrant such a course.'

'Those men are not mine. I dismissed them yesterday.'

'I regret that even your assertion of this does not seem to me sufficient cause for my not taking action. But,' he added with a smile, 'it is useless to discuss the matter now.' He raised his hand to his hat, with one of his ironically courteous gestures, wheeled his horse, and walked it away round the flock.

John rode straight home, full of conflicting thoughts. He was not sure whether it was all a trick of Carter's, or not. The young man's easy self-possession, amounting so often to amused superiority, had impressed him thus far. He troubled himself little about the prosecution. Not that for a moment he thought it was an empty threat, but it seemed to him to be after all only of secondary importance, for it did not occur to him that the charge could be substantiated. He was honest, and had no belief in honesty being defeated if it had a fair trial. The story of the father's con-

viction had, characteristically enough, never been mentioned by the father himself. Mrs Webb had alluded to it once or twice to her children, for she feared lest, if they were ignorant of it, they might be pained some day more than needs be by having it cast in their faces. She had told them that their father's conviction was unjust, but they did not give much heed to it one way or another. Once or twice John had been angered by having it brought to his notice, but he had never reflected about it, and if he had been asked whether he believed his father was innocent or guilty, and, if innocent, to explain how this accorded with his own belief in the efficacy of honesty, he would have been puzzled to reply. What really did trouble him now was the thought of all these things here being too strong for him—the thought of failure. He was even a little confused, but throughout his confusion ran the one same idea, not to face his failure, not to suppose it as even possible. He knew so well what failure meant to him, that he

almost feared to take the hastiest glances at it. That way madness lay. He was capable, if he saw that he was ruined and that this was due to the deliberate purpose of anyone, of wrecking a vengeance, hopeless, desperate, terrible. He absolutely pleaded Carter's cause to himself, and even Graham's; they were not perhaps as bad as he had imagined! Having eaten and drunken a little, he determined to go out and work with might and main, in the hope of so wearing himself out, that, when he returned, he should fall asleep and forget. If he had known how to, he would have prayed for patience, —prayed to God passionately for patience! As it was, he wrestled with himself as he went along. Patience, patience, it was the only thing to save him! He would have given much to have had Miss Hassal—Annie—here. If he could only tell her of it all, it would ease him, and then she would soothe him and point out what was to be done. He threw himself upon the work with a savage joy, and

exerted himself to the utmost. When the light failed and the men stopped, he went further on in search of Scott, and, as they returned together to the hut, told him about the stolen sheep. Scott suspected a trap of Graham's, and added suspicions about Carter. John combatted both, but Scott's conviction only ended, although John would not admit it, in convincing him. He could no longer restrain his thoughts, and they began to lash him like whips. At last he hurried out into the night, striding away fiercely through the grass. He could have wished to destroy something. Once seeing a shadow moving along the ground, he halted suddenly. To have put a plunging bullet through the body of a dingo, and then stood and looked at his workmanship, would have been a satisfaction to him. He was an excellent shot with a revolver, but he had left his in its case on his bunk. The shadow glided out of sight, and was not to be got within view again. He returned to the hut. But his restlessness

pursued him. At last, coming back to the idea of Miss Hassal and her soothing influence, he sat down and wrote her a letter, telling her of what had happened. This relieved him somewhat, but only for a time. The old unrestrainable thoughts returned with a new fury. He flung himself onto his bed, and tossed and tossed for hours, till his wakefulness became so intense as to be almost aching. Outside, on a tree close to the hut, a wagtail, a shepherd's companion sat, piping its ceaseless monotonous note. The same bird had annoyed him a few nights before, its cry having taken to him the sound of 'O, Bea-trice-trice! O, Bea-trice-trice!' till he had almost determined to go out and shoot it or frighten it away. Now the refrain was becoming maddening.

'O, Bea-trice-trice! O, Bea-trice-trice! O, Bea-trice-trice!' piped the bird.

He lay in the intermediate silences, waiting with almost anguish for the repetition, and, when it came, it was like the drops of water onto the forehead of the man bound

below—Devil's tears, as the old torturers called them.

'O, Bea-trice-trice! O, Bea-trice-trice! O, Bea-trice-trice!' piped the weariless wag-tail.

At last he could endure it no longer, but, leaping up, caught hold of the case and drew out his revolver. For a moment, held by some unaccountable impulse, he stood perfectly still, listening to the throbbing silence, yet intent on the barrel raised in his hand, so close to his face. What if, instead of going out there and shooting at the bird, he raised it a little, and pulled this trigger which his finger held so caressingly? It was an alternative. He lifted his eyes and looked round him in the dark. Scott turned a little in his bunk, and began to breathe heavily.

'O, Bea-trice-trice! O, Bea-trice-trice!'

He put down the revolver on the planks that served for a table, and, going out, broke off a small bough from a sapling, and threw it up at the place where he thought the bird

was. It flew up, and off away into the night. He came back and lay down in his bed again. His restlessness had left him. It seemed to him as if he had scarcely closed his eyes before he was asleep.

II.

AFTERGLOW.

CARTER had said that he would not delay in settling the matter that was between him and John ; but legalised justice, which moves slowly in the towns, creeps in the country, and in the bush as often as not seems to progress as the crab does—side-wards. The justices of the peace are for the most part squatters, and, according to our fine old English custom, unpaid. It is as bad an arrangement as is possible, but that, of course, seems little or no objection to its continuance. Many of the cases which these squatting justices are called upon to decide, are between members of their own class and that which is so bitterly opposed to it—the selecting class. On the

one hand their personal friends, on the other their personal enemies. To counterbalance their feelings in favour of their friends, is the reflection of the harm that can be done them by their enemies. It is so easy to draw a knife here and there through a wire fence, or to drop a match on the summer grass, and watch a picturesque bush fire. And this, again, is clearly an incentive, as well to the impartial as to the partial judge, to dispense the best justice he can. Add to this that many of these men are quite incompetent to fulfil their office, and the present unsatisfactory state of things, in at any rate the outlying districts, may be understood by any one, except a Member of Assembly.

The Justice of the Peace to whom Carter applied happened to be a personal friend of Carter's father: an honest man enough, so far as he went, but, after all, other qualities seem to be wanted in a judge beside a class-prejudiced honesty. A short time before, he had himself had several hundred sheep

stolen. He had little or no doubt of the existence of what young Carter had called an organised ring of sheep stealers, and, too, of the fact that this ring was composed of small selectors. The case against John, which they amicably discussed together, was a bad one, and it lost nothing of its badness in Carter's hands. When he told of how Webb had at first consented to accompany Graham and himself, and then wished to turn back, Rogers, the justice, shook his head.

'That's bad,' he said, 'that's a bad sign! He thought you couldn't do it, until he saw you could, and then he wanted to go back? That's a bad sign!'

'The sheep,' said Carter, 'had been moved twice in the night, and it was only by chanee my man learned of it. If he had taken us to the first place, we should not have found them.'

'And the fellow went on with you, I suppose,' said Rogers, 'because he was afraid of your men?' (Carter had told him

of what had been said to Webb about the men waiting by the tree.)

‘I think so,’ said the other. ‘That, and bravado. He seemed to see he had made a mistake in wanting to turn back, and tried to cover it.’

‘The men *were* his?’ asked Rogers, determining to be impartial as became both himself and his office.

‘They had left him, he said, the night before,’ answered Carter, ‘and they said the same. But on the way they admitted to Graham and some of the men, that they had been put up to it by Webb. There had been some little trouble before this between my overseer and him. Our boundary was not as respected as it might have been.’

It was not for almost a month after this that John received his summons to attend at Mamerie, a small township fifty or sixty miles to the north. From this it was clear to him that, if the case were proceeded with it would be carried, not to Warana, but to Ilaquin, a town still further north on the

Murray. He troubled himself little with the thought of whether it would be proceeded with or not. That he might be imprisoned and remanded for trial did not occur to him. Things were proceeding better now on the run. It seemed as if a hand that had held it was relaxed a little. No more of his men left, and those who stayed were on better terms with him. At the same time, it was a very great annoyance to have to leave them to themselves while he was going, as he put it, to ride over to Mamerie and daudle about there on a fool's errand. He had not heard from either Beatrice or Annie for several weeks now, and it might be weeks still before he got an answer to his last. At this point, the day before he had to start, he was amazed one morning to receive notice from all his men that they meant to go at once. The severity of the blow was increased by its unexpectedness. For several moments he was incapable of word or motion, and almost of thought. Then two ideas suddenly

presented themselves to him: one was to get his revolver and empty it among them, the other to humble himself and ask them to stay. The men stood there in silence in front of him, most of them looking on the ground. Scott, beside him, did the same: it seemed as if he knew of it all.

At last:

‘Look’—said John in a husky voice, but could not proceed. He made a rapid spasmodic gesture with his hand and arm; turned, and went into the hut. Scott, presently following him, found him sitting on the edge of his bunk, staring at the floor. John looked up.

‘Go out,’ he said hoarsely, ‘and tell them that I’ll pay them higher wages than those damned . . .’ (He could find no fitting name for them, but flung up his face as he added :) ‘—whatever it is!’

Scott stood irresolute, stammering inarticulately.

‘What?’ said John. ‘Isn’t it any good?’

He rose and went to the door.

'You can go,' he said, smiling, to the men, 'you can go. What are you waiting for? You can go to h——, and stop there, if you please.'

'Go to h—— yourself,' answered one of them, turning away.

John laughed out loud.

'Now, I tell you, Jim Stevens,' he said, 'the next time we meet,—there, or in any other quiet place—we shall have an account to settle. I've several others to settle first, but I daresay I'll be able to settle them all before I'm through with it!'

He turned and re-entered the hut, followed by the abuse of the men as they got further off. He took short spasmodic steps along the floor, as if he had cramp in the leg, his head hanging down, his hands deep in his breeches' pockets: he was grinning and laughing.

'Scott,' he said, suddenly, 'I'll ride into Mamerie now, and see what Carter has to say about my stealing his—sheep. See after the place as well as you can, and, if they

put me in quod any time and hang me afterwards, you won't forget to make the most of it, like the other thieves.'

Without waiting for any answer, he went to his wooden box, which he unlocked, took out a small box of revolver cartridges, and slipped it into the inner pocket of his coat. Then he got out some food, paying no attention to Scott, who stood watching him in astonishment. John sat at the table eating and drinking.

'Bob,' he said, with his mouth full of 'damper,' mutton, and cold tea, 'Bob's hobbled out there, Scott. You can bring him up if you like.'

Scott went out, caught the horse, saddled him, and brought him to the door, against the side of which John, smoking, with his hands deep in his pockets, was now leaning. He came forward, taking the bridle without a word, and lifting up the flap, looked at the girths by the buckles. Then he quickly mounted and rode away, saying :

'Good-night !'

Scott stood for some time watching him. Bob was fresh and ready for a gallop, but his rider gave him no encouragement, and so they proceeded at a quick trot.

‘He called me a thief,’ said Scott to himself, ‘but he didn’t mean it. He’s down on his luck, pore chap, and—he’s left his rifle behind!’

He entered the hut. The rifle, an old English Government Enfield, stood in its corner, clean and oiled, with a little scrap of oily rag in the muzzle to keep out the dust; the gun was in the opposite corner at the foot of John’s bunk, equally cared for. Scott had no intention of touching them, unless it were to put them in a safe place. He would stop here and do his best to keep things going until he had further news.

It was evening by the time John arrived in Mamerie, a small township in which he had been several times before, and, it happened on one occasion with a rather unpleasant experience. He had not to appear in court till the day after the next. He

was not quite sure whether he intended to appear at all. On the other hand, his prudence, such as it was even then, warned him that this would be a useless—nay, a foolish course to pursue. He was quite calm and self-possessed now, as a man may be who has heard the worst Fate has to say to him and faced it. And yet there would come moments in which wrath would rise in him, and threaten action more or less violent, but he consciously struggled against this, and successfully. It was his old self-demand for patience—patience which alone could save him and win for him the prize which was dearer to him than life. Once it struck him how different he was in all this to what he could ever have imagined it was possible for him to be : and, suddenly recognising the cause, he had a burst of gratitude for that which had wrought this change in him—for his love—for *Her* ! For the first time in his life he turned his eyes inward upon his own soul.

‘I’d ’ve bin a sulky brute like the boss,’

he said to himself, 'if it hadn't been for *Her!*'

He meant that a failure, such as his present, would have brutalised him if it had not been for the soothing, sweetening thought of patience which the idea of winning her brought to him. He had had his outburst of ferocity, but not of a mad ferocity, and it had passed. This long day, spent out in the scrub, lying by the bank of the sunny creek, was one of the most deeply pleasurable of his life. He had failed; yes, he had failed, and a considerable amount of Annie's—Miss Hassal's money had been lost; but he would try again and he would succeed. Oh, he would be very patient! It was impossible but that he should succeed in the end. He had perhaps made the mistake this time of being in too great a hurry. Perhaps it would be three or even four years yet before she could come to him. What of that? He should have her letters and occasional glimpses of her; and on these and the certain hope of their final meeting,

and for ever, he could exist well enough.—
For ever? Ah, for ever and for ever!
Love strong as death!

He lay there thinking of it all, feeling rather than comprehending his thoughts, as is usual with such more or less dumb natures, oblivious of all around him. The great gold sun passed on round the vault of cloudless blue, and plunged into a bank of horizon clouds, suffusing them with jewelled lights. Still he lay there thinking. The sound, the very presence of the moving water soothed him. The rhythms of it acted on his thoughts, and gave them depth and softness. The clouds began to lose their intensity of colour, but grew in tender clearness. All over the earth men have lain at such sunset hours, dreaming of the past and the future, and found the refreshment of repose. A shrieking flock of galahs, on their final fight before they settled to their roost, passed over and round him, and, lifting up his head, he saw how all their grey feathers were flushed with the sun-

set light, their coloured breasts deepening into darkest ruby. They seemed like loosed spirits. He had a certain pleasure in this sight of them—the pleasure that he had had as a boy in the bright, breezy sky and air, in the birds and beasts which it was his business to kill or let alone. It was characteristic of him that he had always disliked shooting birds that mated. The bereaved one spoke to him. Now as he looked at this bright soaring galaxy, he had a mystical feeling of its connection with her fate and his—somehow as if these birds were the souls of unhappy lovers, let loose in a half-bewildered crowd into the hours of sunset, floating on, on, on, with discordant cries—on, on, on to the horizon realm of dim forgetfulness! The feeling seemed to him so strange that it touched him with superstitious awe. He rose to his feet, and waved his arms and shouted at them. The action in some way freed him. He came back slowly into the township to the Woolpack, where he had put up, and went in to have tea. He

was late; the tea, served regularly to the boarders at the hotel and to chance guests, was over. Jemima, the smart and pretty maid, was inclined to pout a little at extra trouble. He sat at the middle of the two tables in the dining-room, his elbows on the cloth, still dreaming. She had to repeat her questions as to what he would have.

‘Ah,’ he said, looking up in her eyes, ‘What’ll I have? What you like!’

There are some looks on a man’s face that a woman, with any natural sweetness in her, recognises instinctively. Jemima recognised it in John, and her heart had a kindly feeling to him. She went into the kitchen and took pains to bring him his tea and a chop nice and hot. She drew the plate of raddishes and lettuce close to him, and placed the cruets at hand. And, when all was ready, she stood at the end of the table leaning her hands back on the wall, ready for a little conversation. He was taken up with his thoughts and paid no heed. She came and sat on a chair opposite to him. She

would have found it natural enough if he had presently confided in her any trouble that he might have. Perhaps he was going to appear at the court to-morrow, and Jemima had a belief that most people who appear at courts are rather sinned against than sinning. John began to eat his tea in silence.

‘Are you a Warana man?’ she asked, at a venture, regarding him with her frank brown eyes, (and, as he was so absent, it was possible to regard your fill, and a good enough looking young fellow he was, too!) ‘I think I’ve seen you somewhere. I’ve an aunt lives in Warana—Mrs Harris—at the London House—the store. Do you know her? She sometimes sends me the papers. Do you read the papers? I’ll go and get you the *Warana Advertiser* if you haven’t seen it.—*Would* you like it?’ she asked, prettily, ‘That’s the question!’ She wanted to cheer him up a little; for *she* was always cheery (or almost always), and all the young men who haunted the Woolpack were given to being laughed and chaffed out of all other

states by Jemima into her own habitual one. Indeed she piqued herself on it.

John acquiesced. She had not annoyed him with her interruption, pleased him, rather, but now he would as soon she left him alone. She returned with the paper.

‘What?’ she said, seeing he had pushed his chair back from the table, ‘Have you *done*? Have another cup of tea!’ She handed him the paper.

He declined the tea with thanks, and, after a few more words from her, preferring to stay here rather than go into the room with the men, as she suggested to him as an alternative, spread out the paper and began to read it. There was a certain amount of interest in it for him, but not much. Presently he found himself mechanically looking up and down the advertisements, and the short list of Births and Deaths (there were no Marriages in this issue) passed under his eye. Something happened then which he did not in the least realise. He put the paper down on the table. It

seemed to him a time quite inappreciable before he took it up again, and, looking at the second of the Deaths, read :

'On the 13th inst., at the Cottage, Warana, Beatrice, the fourth daughter of Alexander Humphreys, late of Adelaide and Melbourne. She fell asleep in Jesus. Adelaide papers please copy.'

He read it again and again, and could make little or nothing of it. Nonetheless he acted on what might have been called a plan which resulted from it. He got up and went in search of the hotel-keeper, intending to ask him for his bill ; and, finding the hotel-keeper's wife, asked her instead. She answered that she would find out for him. Was he going at once ?

'Yes,' he said, 'I'm just going round to saddle my horse.'

He took Bob out of the stable and saddled him with his usual care : then led him round to the door and hooked the bridle to one of the wire hooks put there for the purpose. He came into the dining-room and once

more took up the newspaper to read that unrealisable paragraph, or see if he had only dreamed about it.

'On the 13th inst., at the Cottage, Warana, Beatrice, the fourth daughter of Alexander Humphreys, late of Adelaide and Melbourne. She fell asleep in Jesus. Adelaide papers please copy.'

He had no feeling of there being any incongruity here. The announcement being still unrealisable, utterly so, to him, the manner of it was all but non-existent. Jemima came in with the bill.

'So you're *going!*' she said. 'Well, now, I shouldn't have thought it!'

'Yes,' he said, 'I'm going. Will you give me this paper?' he asked, simply.

'To be sure,' she said, 'if you want it!'

'Good-bye,' he said.

Something in his manner prevented her from thinking him brusque and bad-mannered.

'Good-bye,' she answered.

He went out folding the newspaper and putting it into his pocket, leaving her

wondering if it had had anything to do with his sudden departure, and saying to herself, with a pout, that she wouldn't lend people papers *again*, anyway!

As he rode out of the street and into the road, the evening was closing fast. The clouds, which had risen up in the west in the shape of a gigantic bird, seated with outstretched wings, were almost colourless. Venus shone with silver radiance high up in the heavens. The moon, past her first quarter, was low down towards the horizon, a silver sickle. Carter, who had been stopping at the house of a friend of his, a neighbouring squatter, was coming along the road into the opposite side of Mamerie. A few miles behind him on the same road, Rogers and one of his daughters were driving in a buggy, bound for the Paragon, the chief hotel in Mamerie, to which Carter also was bound. In the still evening, John, stopping just outside Mamerie, close to a solitary shanty, heard the sound of wheels borne for an instant to him. An old woman

stood looking at him from the door of the shanty. He took out a match and the newspaper, and struck a light on his trousers, holding it in the hollow of his hand over the place where was that preterhuman paragraph.

'On the 13th inst., at the Cottage, Warana, Beatrice, the fourth daughter of Alexander Humphreys, late of Adelaide and Melbourne. She fell asleep in Jesus. Adelaide papers please copy.'

He threw away the match, and, folding up the paper, put it in his pocket and rode on. The old woman came and carefully stamped out the still flaming wood, which had fallen into the short dusty roadside grass.

'Careless chap!' she muttered to herself, as she came back through the gate. 'They're all like it, them stock riders!'

John was riding away at a quick trot into the night.

III.

THE TRUTH OF IT.

IT was a little after mid-day that he arrived in Warana. The air was cold and clear, one of those days of sudden change to which southern Australia is liable, even in mid-summer, a hot north wind passing quickly into a cold south wind. The horse he rode was utterly exhausted. Rowe, who happened to be standing under the verandah at the door of the Royal where John alighted, having hailed him, remarked the fact, but received no answer. John led the horse round, saw him properly stabled, and passing out at the gate of the yard, made straight for the Cottage. His face was haggard and his air would have been hopelessly jaded, but for the feverish energy which still

galvanised it. Few people noticed him as he limped along by the short cut across the river, but one or two cast long looks of astonishment at him. Rumours of his ill-success on his run had reached Warana. The true news-agents of the bush are the swagsmen who pass from place to place, dispensing their gossip at each hut and wayside 'pub.' Was he, then, in the usual phrase, 'broke'? Nothing else but this could account to the average Warana intelligence for his presence here at such a time, and so it betook itself to passing the news round that young Webb was 'stone broke,' and had come back to try and make it up with his father, for all Warana knew now of this also. John passed on his way in complete heedlessness. He had but one purpose in him at present, and that was to see Miss Hassal. And yet, when he reached the garden gate—*that* gate—the flood of memories which it brought back, for the moment overwhelmed him. He turned sick and stood still. His physical exhaustion

made itself felt. He had been for almost three days in the saddle; had killed one horse; appropriated another, and ridden it as nearly to death as possible, himself all the while drinking little and eating less. It had needed all the strength of a flawless constitution, with all its resources, not only unharmed by the conduct of youth and manhood, but developed and confirmed, to stand such a strain. And now, the dauntless soul within for a moment wavering, the body felt its weakness. He could not tell how long he stood there with his senses in abeyance; it seemed an age, an age all but intolerably weak and weary. Then the dense mist-curtain withdrew from his eyes, the wave of whirling sound from his ears, and he saw the sunlight and heard a cock crow, as it were, from the midst of it. He had fallen back from the front of the gate. He advanced again, and saw the garden and the house before him. He could not feel that Beatrice was gone from him forever—was dead! He would go to Miss Hassal, and she would

tell him, perhaps, that Beatrice was indeed gone, but that he might in some way hope to see her again—to join her, or persuade her to return to him. He came up the path, thinking in this way, and reached the verandah. He almost expected to see Miss Hassal, dressed in white, lying back in the wicker easy-chair by the door, looking at him, waiting for him. But it was not so. He stepped on to the verandah, and went along towards her room. Alice, sitting in the dining-room sewing and dreaming, had heard his step on the gravel, and the sound of it now on the wooden floor of the verandah roused her into sudden surprise. She ran to the half-open window, putting aside the blind, and saw him as he stopped at the open garden-window of the studio. He stood and looked in; no one was there. And yet it never occurred to him as possible that Annie was gone. He stood with a deep sure patience, waiting for her to come.

‘Good gracious!’ said a startled voice by his side, ‘Mr Webb!’

It was Alice.

‘I’m waiting for Miss Hassal,’ he said simply, ‘I want to see her.’ At first she did not understand him, his voice was so changed. Then the meaning of what he had said came to her.

‘She’s in her room,’ she answered, unconscious of her words, ‘I expect.’

‘Tell her I’m here,’ said John.

He passed in and stood on the hearth-rug in front of the large white-washed fire-place, at the back of which a small wood fire burned brightly. Alice followed him and went to the door of Miss Hassal’s room, at which she knocked.

‘Come in,’ said her voice.

Alice did not enter. She opened the door a little, enough to see Annie lying on her bed, reading a book, and said :

‘Here is Mr Webb. He wants to see you.’

Annie rose and came to the door. Alice, perceiving that her presence was not necessary, slowly withdrew, wondering, struck with awe, not yet quite conscious of it all.

John still stood motionless on the hearth-rug, his head down, his eyes on the floor. Annie came to him. Aware of this, he lifted up his face and looked at her. It seemed to her as the face of one risen from the grave—of one killed or lost in the bush, returning to the haunts of men under the impulse of some unknown supernatural wish. His slouch hat, thrust hard onto his head, dust-coloured, like all his dress, gave him a wan look as of some creature of the twilight dawn. His voice, she knew, would be strange.

‘Ah,’ he said, ‘Miss Hassal—Annie.’

‘Yes,’ she answered, ‘It is I.’

He looked away for a moment, as if to recall something: then, slowly recalling it, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a newspaper. He held it up before him, till he had found the place where the Births and Deaths were, and then extended it to her.

‘Haven’t you seen it?’ he asked. ‘Is it true?’

She took it from him and let her eyes find

the names *Beatrice* and *Humphreys*, more in unconscious obedience of his wish for her to look than for any care of reading the thing.

‘Yes,’ she said, lifting large sad eyes to his, ‘it is true.’

There was a silence.

‘She is dead!’ he said to himself. ‘She is dead!’

Suddenly an idea struck him.

‘Where is she?’ he asked. ‘Can’t I see her?’

‘It is three weeks since she died,’ said Annie gently.

‘And can’t I see her? Where have they put her to?’ He had never thought of her as buried, buried in the cold, red clay earth, away from the light.

‘I *must* see her,’ he muttered to himself, looking down with a wild look coming into his eyes, ‘*Why* can’t I see her?’

‘Come,’ said Annie, laying her hand gently on his arm, ‘she is here.’

He looked up with the quick look of a trusting child whom we are about to take to

something it has longed for. She lead him to the easel, and removed the covering. Beatrice was smiling at him. He stood gazing at her with a sort of unrealising wonder. His lips moved, and at last she heard him whisper :

‘ But I—I—?’

There was something so overwhelming to her in the sight of this grief, something at once so inexpressibly woeful and awful, that she felt as if she might not be able to bear it, and this almost terrified her. She could think of nothing else to say or do. She could see no good in showing him the picture of himself. She must let him be as he was and trust that thus he would best grow to understand.

All at once he uttered a low cry, and then another, and, lifting himself up, and with a slow spasmodic effort, turning round a little, fell forward flat onto his face. In a moment she had quite recovered herself. She bent beside him, and turned him over onto his back, taking the stud out of his shirt, and

opening it. Then she covered up the picture, and passed into the room to her chest of drawers, from its place in which she took her brandy flask and returned to him. Even now, the faint had almost passed. He was moving his head uneasily, his face twitching, his lips stammering with broken words. At the very first mouthful of brandy he revived, and, taking the flask from her into his own hand, sat up. His confusion began to leave him. She spoke to him cheerfully, and presently they were talking of his state. He told her that he had not eaten enough the past few days.

‘I’ll go and get you something at once, then,’ she said, and, having seen him seated in an easy-chair, went out into the house, glad of the opportunity to leave him to himself for a little. She found Alice in the dining-room with Mrs Allen, discussing this apparition of Mr Webb, and called her out to help to get some food. Alice co-operated readily and without asking questions, and presently Annie had spread out a little meal

before him, and was inviting him to partake of it. He still did not realise what had taken place; he had forgotten all about his need of food; he had gone back again into the realms of day-dreams. She had to lead him to the table like a stricken child which obeys a guiding hand with mechanical trust. At first he could not eat; it seemed as if the food must remain still in his mouth as in that of one dead. But she persevered, and at last he swallowed a few morsels. He sat gazing in front of him with great sightless eyes, at which she could not bear to look. If only the tears would come, she thought, they would ease him of this cruel tension. The meal progressed slowly. All at once he stopped eating, his eyes were suffused, and putting his head into his arms on the table, he sobbed convulsively. She sat silent, looking at him with a great love and pity. And then it occurred to her to wonder how many years had it been since the eyes of this dauntless soul had known the moisture of tears, and how many would it be before

they should know it again? She rose softly, and went into her own room.

Ten or twelve minutes later, she heard a knock at her door, and, opening it, found him standing there.

‘It’s all right now,’ he said, smiling. ‘I’m sorry I got crying like that. I oughter have gone off by myself. But I wasn’t ready for it and it took me all of a heap!’

She smiled back to him.

‘Now,’ he said, turning a little, ‘I’ll eat something, while you tell me about her.’

He came back to the table and sat down, she following him, seating herself in a chair a little behind him.’

There was a silence.

Then :

‘You know,’ he said with a ghastly smile, ‘I’m a fool. I haven’t understood things. But I understand now. Tell me all you know—all you know, and don’t think I sha’n’t understand everything!’ He turned and looked at her for a moment.

‘There is not much to tell you,’ she said,

when he had turned back again. 'She had been ailing for several weeks, in low spirits, and suffering from her eyes. They were afraid that she was going to have an attack of "sandy blight." There was a good deal of typhoid fever about, and the drainage here is detestable. She caught it. I was with her from first to last.'

'And does typhoid fever *kill* people?' he asked simply, like a child.

'Sometimes. So much depends upon the strength of their constitution and state of health at the time.'

There was another silence.

'Did she,' he asked slowly in a low tone, 'ever speak about me?'

She paused for a moment.

'—Do not,' he cried, 'say she did, if she didn't.'

'She spoke of you twice. She said she was sorry for you, and on the evening before she died, I heard her say to herself, "Poor John!" We spoke little together. It was not possible.'

‘Ah! poor John? And she was sorry?’

Another silence.

‘What made her in low spirits?’ he asked,

‘It wasn’t *me*?’

Annie kept silence.

He turned round upon her sharply.

‘Ha!’ he cried, ‘you’re fooling me! You’re not telling me the truth.’ He gazed at her with dilating eyes. She met his gaze calmly.

‘I have told you,’ she said, ‘nothing but what is true.’

He got up, and began pacing up and down, muttering to himself. He stopped opposite her.

‘O,’ he said, ‘tell me, you *must* tell me! I’ve been blind, blind and deaf, a perfect fool! I always knew it in my heart, but I wouldn’t tell myself, I wouldn’t let myself know! You’re hiding something from me. You think it wouldn’t do any good for me to know. You think I wouldn’t understand it. I’d understand anything! Tell me!’

She sat still, listening to his passionate

pleading, facing this problem of hers, seeking to be sure that she grasped it. A sudden access of impatient wrath seized him. He caught her by the arm and dragged her up onto her feet.

‘Tell me,’ he cried, ‘tell me, or I’ll—’

Her eyes smiled at him sadly. It was enough. He let go of her, turning away with a sort of agony.

‘Oh, I’ll go mad,’ he said, ‘I’ll go mad, if I don’t know!’

‘Listen,’ she said, ‘I will tell you.’

He came to her quickly, eagerly, pacified.

‘Sit there,’ she said, pointing to his place, ‘and do not look at me as I speak. I can tell it more simply then.’

He sat down in the chair, pushing away the plate and glass from him. She had decided to proceed, and yet she hesitated. He did not perceive this, nor was there anything in her calm manner and tone and words to disclose it to him.

‘Beatrice,’ she said slowly, ‘did not love you.’

‘I knew it,’ he said, nodding his head, ‘I knew it.’

‘I do not know that she loved anyone else. I thought once I understood her, and perhaps I did, but a human soul is difficult to read. Sometimes I understand all that she did, and sometimes I do not. You had a wild jealousy of Carter.’

‘Ha,’ he said with a start, tightening his hand as if he had received a sudden stab in the chest.

‘It was a just one. Carter came here for his pleasure. For myself I had no dislike for him, but to me wild beasts have their attraction. Perhaps I should have foreseen what it is to let a panther play with children. It seemed that he had a fancy for both the girls. I paid no heed to it, perhaps because he was so careful when we were together to be the same to all of us. I had too little care for Alice or him to watch them closely, and, when I saw that he made love to her, and that she was caught by it, I did not think to trouble myself whether this was but a

blind of his and that the girl would have to suffer for it. Alice was only a blind. We were both deceived.'

She paused, and the pause grew into a silence. She had a hope that perhaps this would be enough. If fate bade her speak, she would speak, but not otherwise.

'Yes,' he said, 'she was a blind. Well?'

'I do not know that Beatrice loved him. I do not think she did. I do not think she knew what it was to love anyone.'

Another silence.

'Go on,' he said in a low tone, 'finish it. Don't think I can't bear it. I can bear anything if I only know it now. Tell me!'

She wondered at his intuition. There was nothing, she knew, in her manner or words that should have of themselves suggested that there was more to come. Even now she hesitated again.

'Go on,' he said.

She was impelled.

'Carter,' she said, 'was here when none of us knew.'

A pause.

'They were alone together?' he said, in a whisper. 'You mean they were alone together—at night?'

'Yes,' she said.

'God!' he muttered, 'God! You stab me, you stab me . . . But go on, go on. Don't stop!'

'That is all. I do not know why she consented to be engaged to you.'

'A blind,' he cried wildly, leaping up, 'a blind, a blind! And she would have married me too!—Now tell,' he said, coming to her and peering into her face, 'tell me how you know this. If you've lied to me, I'll rip you limb from limb. How do you know it?'

She did not quail.

'It is enough,' she said, 'that I know it. Let us say no more of it.'

'But I'll have proof,' he said. 'I'll not be stabbed in the heart once—twice—thrice—again and again—for nothing. She told you?'

'She told me.'

‘When?’

‘When she was first ill.’

‘Of herself?’

‘No.’

‘How then?’

‘I had myself found out.’

‘Found out? How?’

‘I came to her room one night, and—

He closed his eyes and his head moved back as if he would swoon. He opened and closed one hand, raising it in the air.

‘Enough,’ he whispered, ‘enough ; I’ve enough.’

A silence.

He opened his eyes, and looked at her for long with a strange sad gaze.

‘You have no more to tell me?’ he said.
‘Nothing more? Not a word? If you have, tell me. I must know all you know, for fear I go mad, and I wouldn’t go mad for the whole world. Where was he? tell me, where was he?’

‘They were just parting. It was early morning. He was seated on the bed, sooth-

ing her, and she was crying. Ask me no more,' she said.

'And you're sure,' he said, 'you're *sure* that she was . . . was his? She told you so?'

'She told me so.'

'And . . . and . . . Stab, stab,' he cried to himself, convulsively plucking at his breast, 'that kills me—cuts my heart in two. But I say, it *shall* not! I'll know it, and I'll live to stab him back again!'

He came to her.

'Tell me,' he said gently with trembling lips, ' . . . A child—she wouldn't have had a child if she'd lived? Don't be afraid to tell me, if you know. I haven't much more to do in the earth. We all go to sleep at last. She sleeps now, and, if I would know this, who of all the people of the earth should it harm, then?' He knelt on one knee before her, pleading with upraised face.

'Yes,' she said, 'she was happy that she should die.'

His face fell back, moving a little from

side to side, lit with a wonderful unearthly light.

‘Happy,’ he said to himself, smiling, ‘happy, very happy!—*Love strong as death*,’ he whispered.

There was a pause.

‘And now,’ he said, rising, still smiling, ‘it’s time I went away to see where you’ve put her for a little.’ He stopped. ‘But first,’ he said, ‘let me think.’

The pause grew into a silence again, which was broken by his heaving a deep sigh.

‘Here it is,’ he said, turning to her, speaking very gently. ‘I haven’t very much more to do with these—with you and her and our love together. I sha’n’t go back again to the run, but I’ll see that what you gave me’s returned you. I’ll send it you presently, bit by bit, or all at once. I can’t quite tell. But I see my way clearly. Will you stay here, now that she’s gone?’

‘No,’ she answered, ‘I shall leave here very soon. I only waited for *you*.’

‘And you knew I’d come?’

'I wrote to you, and was waiting here for your answer. I could not tell what you might wish to do.'

'Where'll you go to, then?'

'To Sydney. But I cannot say how long I shall stay there. I shall go back again to England.'

'But,' he said, 'if I send you money—to your bank there — you'll always get it?'

She smiled.

'This,' she said, 'is nothing. There is no need that you should think of it. I have enough.'

No,' he said, 'I wish it, and you must be sure to get it.—Now,' he added, turning to her again, 'I'm going.'

She rose.

'Is there nothing I can do?' she asked.

'Nothing,' he said.

He took her hand and looked at her.

'May I kiss you?' he said.

She held her face up to him, and he kissed her on the cheek. Then he turned

to go, but, at the open window, turned back again.

‘I can’t thank you,’ he said, looking at her, with his strange, sad gaze. ‘I don’t know how to say it, but I love you for all you’ve done. I shall never forget you, never, never, never! If she and I meet again, and are together, I’ll come to you and tell you that I haven’t forgotten.’

With a sudden impulse, he stepped back to her, took her hands, and kissed her again. And so they parted.

IV.

RECKONING DAY.

JOHN arrived at the Royal an hour before dinner time and, having taken a room for the night, went into it and cast himself onto his bed, where he fell into a sort of stupor of sleep. The sound of the dinner-bell did not wake him, nor yet did the knocking of the waiter who came to his room a quarter-of-an-hour later. It was only after the man had severely shaken him, that he roused himself. Then he got up and washed his hands and face, holding his head in the full basin, resolutely dispelling the mist of dreams and fancies that bewildered him. There was no one at dinner but Rowe himself, Rawlins the chemist, and Dr Simpson, one of the doctors of the place, with his wife,

all regular diners at the hotel. They all knew John, and would have talked with him, but he answered their questions with monosyllables, and they soon let him alone. After dinner he went round to the stable, and saddled and bridled his horse. As he rode out through the yard he met Rowe.

‘Hoi,’ said Rowe, ‘riding him again? Look out he don’t drop on the road!’

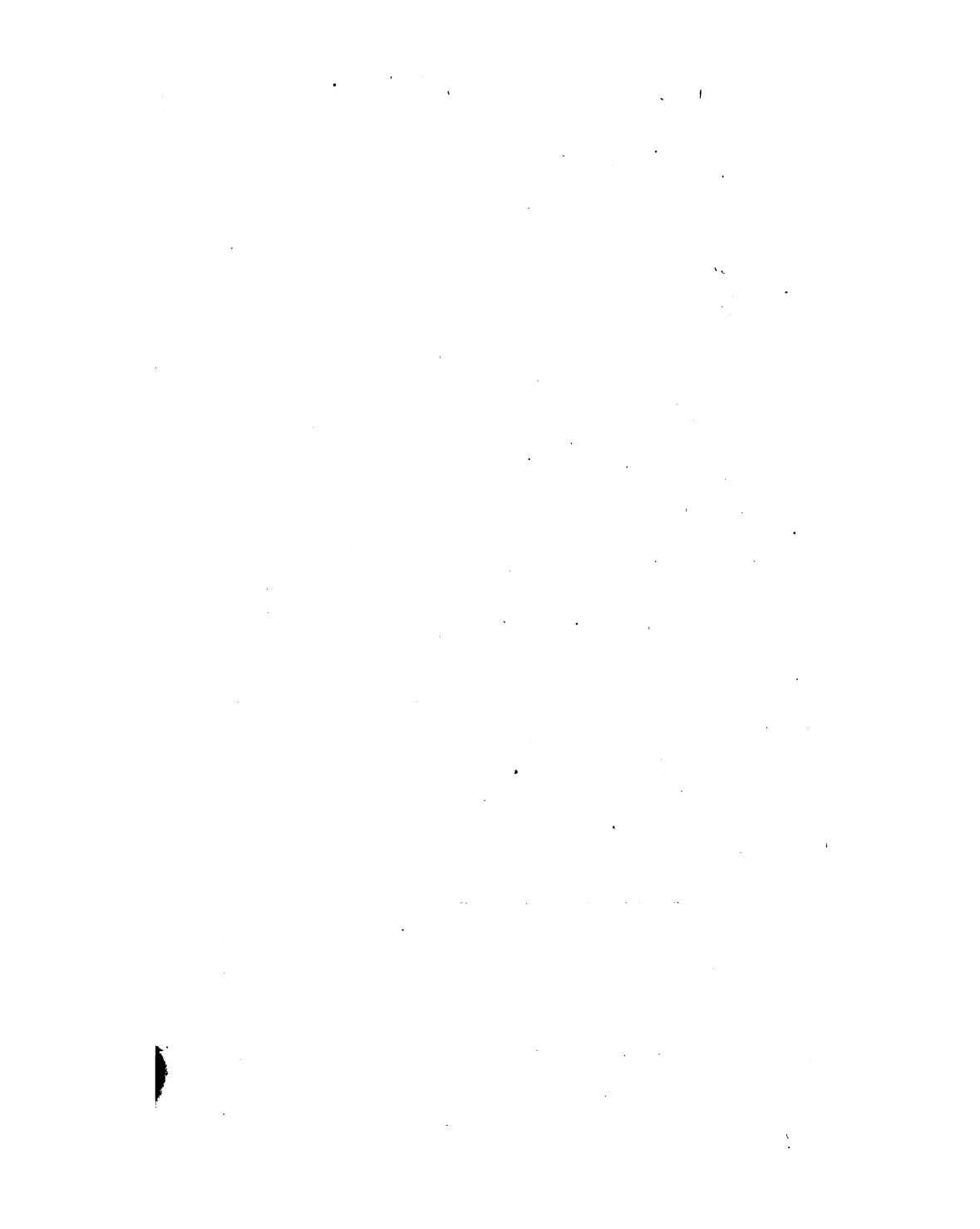
‘He’s a few miles left in him yet,’ answered John. ‘I’ll be back to-night.’

He rode at an easy trot, often slowing to a walk, out along the Sydney road to the Warana Cemetery, about three miles off. It was simply a piece of the plain closed in with white palings. The graves were for the most part uncared for, but the place was saved from hideousness by its wild straggling vegetation which contrasted with the bare brown earth outside, where the ‘mobs’ of travelling sheep had gnawn out even the grass roots. A few stunted sheak trees, dust-choked, charred, and twisted by the drought and the prevalent winds, were

scattered about it. John hooked his horse to the palings, and climbed over. Several years ago a grand-daughter of Mr Humphreys, the child of one of his daughters who was on a visit to him, had died, and John expected to find Beatrice's grave close to the child's. And so it was. There was no tombstone yet. Some flowers, withered by the hot sun and wind which had parched the newly-made grave, lay at the head. He stood looking down at it. The western sky was a mass of veins of gold and reefs of rose. High above shone one star, opposite to another in the east, low down in which was the round lucent moon almost at the full. Still he stood with his bent head, looking at the grave. It was long before he felt something like a prompting weariness, and lay down on the grass, leaning his head on his arm. The veins of gold grew less and less intense, the flush of the reefs of rose grew fainter. The moon came stealing slowly up the sky. There was no sound save a faint, far murmur in the trees, and the



He stood looking down at it.



throbbing whirr of the crickets. He put one arm across the grave, and pressed his face against the earth beside the withered flowers. She was so close to him that he thought it was the coffin-lid that was against his face and not the earth. How still she lay! She would never laugh or speak again! O Beatrice! O sweet and fair! your sweetness and fairness are passed away for ever. Nay, nay; but do not think that you are changed from what you always were! As you lie here, you are the spirit Beatrice that entered into this dark deep heart, an angel occupant! There is no dream of sin and shame within the heaven of it. The wages of these have been earned by others, and shall be paid in full before the long night comes. O Beatrice, O sacred and pure soul, do not think that you did not know this dark deep heart, and rule and love it. It was yours, and is, and always shall be, and you were its, and are, and always shall be. You had no place in that past of sin and shame, and have no place in the future of the payment of their wages. Never think of it!

You and this heart are one, as soul and body are one, and your dear dead face lives in the light of this face above it. No lips ever pressed yours but these. Your heart never beat against any heart but this. Sleep, then happily, darling. Do not fear the dark. For, when you wake, all else shall be forgotten, save the great love that is stronger than death. Sleep happily, darling ; sleep happily ! . . .

As he rode away slowly from the Cemetery, John felt that this part of his life was fulfilled, and, as he had no thought of inquiring why it was so, he had peace. Beatrice had come into his life as a day of sunshine between two nights, and now the day was over. The work of the first night was fulfilled, passing on its fruit into the day, which was ended in its turn. There remained this second night, with the fruit of the past daytime in it ; and the work of it, too, would be fulfilled with time. He saw his way clearly. He would hurry nothing. He came back to the Royal : put up his horse : went to bed, and slept pro-

foundly. The next morning he rose refreshed, calm, and free. He spent the day alone, rambling along the river bank, and lying on his bed. Once or twice he talked a little with the people whom he met and knew. Coming back from a stroll to the hotel to dinner, he went into one of the stores and bought two large knives, talking quietly with the man who served him, smiling a little, and even laughing at some gossip of the place the other gave him. The next morning he was up early, and having gone into the bar-room and paid his bill, rode away out of the town.

‘Off to his dad,’ said the barman to himself, standing at the door and watching him, ‘and much good it’ll do him!’

Late in the afternoon Mr Carter, the elder, appeared at the Royal in a buggy. He was angry, his face flushed a little, casting keen, irritable glances round him. He had news to give. That young scoundrel Webb, he said, had ridden off with one of his best blood-horses, leaving a knocked up old screw in its place. Mr Carter was bent upon doing

something to punish the fellow. They had been out scouring the country about, but could hear nothing of him. Had he been seen in Warana? Mr Carter had news, too, to give the Warana people about the state of John's affairs. John was a broken down sheep-stealer, who had run away from his trial at Mamerie. Mr Carter offered £50 for intelligence that should lead to his capture, and another £50 for his person alive or dead. But nothing of him was to be found or learnt in the Warana district.

Mr Carter, therefore, set out for Mamerie, and, on alighting at the Paragon, at once heard of both his son and John. His son had left Mamerie a few days ago for the station adjoining John's run. John had appeared here, here at the Paragon, only a day before, and an attempt had been made to arrest him, but he had escaped, and made off south. Carter was angered again, and said some sharp things about the people of Mamerie, ending with a repetition of his offer as regarded the young man's person. He was

in doubt now as to what he should do, but finally decided to put up at the hotel for the night, and drive out to his friend Rogers in the morning. He would then decide whether he would go on to the station himself or not.

It was now past sunset. Mr Carter sat in his private room, taking his abstemious meal. (He suffered much from indigestion, and was compelled to live by a strict diet.) The garden - windows were wide open, and he could see the wonderful western sky. There had been a long spell of droughty weather, and it still continued. The evening differed little from that which John had spent in the Warana Cemetery. Carter the younger, riding by the side of the road some sixty miles further south, was in that happy state of mind in which our thoughts seem to partake equally of rest and unrest, combining the pleasures of both. He had been on the road for many hours now, and the cool of the closing evening was refreshing after the hot hours of the afternoon. He would

presently be leaving the road, and striking off towards the station of an acquaintance where he would spend the night. The acquaintance was one of the few men whom he really liked, and he liked not only the man, but his family also. It was almost two years since he had been with them, and the memory of his visit was a pleasant one. He had carried Marian Johnstone in his mind ever since then, as the girl whom he would probably marry some day, and Marian, he thought, knew this, and looked upon herself as in a way as his. Then he thought of Beatrice, this pretty little butterfly that had cost him such trouble to catch, and of the really surprising celerity with which he had wearied of her.

‘I should have thought,’ he said to himself, ‘that in such a dull hole I should have cared for her longer. But girls are so foolish! It is all or nothing with them. Once get them, and they cling to you with all their petty might. It is a great mistake. Poor little Beatrice! Well, it was better to

have had her pleasure, if she was going to die so soon. And then there is Alice!' (and he had his old suppressed smile and shrug and thrusting out of the lip). 'These women are but poorly armed to one who can fence. And my dear she-devil and sphinx, Hassal, I will have her, too, in time, if it is worth the trouble. But I require rousing. All the pretty girls should remain maids for ever, as far as *I* am concerned, if it were not for these whips here—and even with them I fancy I am lazy!'

His thoughts turned to other things—his work with his father, his own future. He was letting his horse walk. A flight of green parrots started out in front of him with their quick sharp cries. Then he thought he heard the sound of distant hoofs. He listened, and was sure of it, as he went riding on reflectively. The road swept away to the right, and ran perfectly straight through a forest of tall white, dead, barkless trees for some way. He passed on, noticing the empty, skeletoned hide of a bullock that

had fallen by the side of the road. The sound of the hoofs came closer. The man was cantering. It did not for some time occur to Carter to turn and look at him. But at last he did so, and several hundred yards behind him, saw a rider coming along at a quick canter, in a cloud of dust. Carter started, and looked at him again.

‘Surely I know him,’ he said to himself. Then he recognised who it was.

‘By Jove,’ he muttered, with a quick look, ‘Webb! And I haven’t my revolver.’

He reined in his horse, which stopped at once, and sat watching the other’s approach. Carter’s intuition at once divined that a meeting between John and himself was unlikely to end without violence of some sort. It struck him, too, as possible, that John might have heard of the death of Beatrice, and that thus to the ruin of his affairs was added the ruin of his love-schemes. Perhaps the fellow was actually in pursuit of him? Carter had the gentleman’s intense dislike to violence which takes the shape of a

personal conflict. He would have thought little of fighting John or any man with fire-arms, but it would have taken much to provoke him to an encounter with fists.

Many thoughts passed through his mind as he sat there. He had no care to be shot like a dog either, and this was almost certainly a desperate man, and armed. On the other hand, he could not endure the thought of flight, and, above all, of flight that might be useless. What should he do? His doubt was only for a few moments. The smile broke ironically on his lips. He would wait where he was.

John came on at the same quick canter to within fifty yards or so, and then changed it into a trot, and at last into a walk. For some time they had not taken their eyes off one another, and now they were close enough to feel the influence of each other's personalities. The moon was beginning to grow radiant and cast faint shadows. John noticed this to himself in a half-unconscious way, and felt a certain pleased amusement at the

presence of this great, round, silver countenance gazing at them through the tossed white arms of the dead and barkless trees. If he had not been so sure of killing Carter in another way, he would have drawn his revolver, and shot him there as he sat.

John reined in his horse, almost facing him, and they looked at one another steadily. For some time neither spoke.

Then :

‘Now,’ said John, slowly, ‘we can settle our account. It isn’t only for what you did for me. It’s for what you did for *her*. You stabbed *me* ; I’ll stab *you*. You killed *her* ; I’ll kill *you*. I have got two knives here,’ he proceeded. ‘We will get down, and settle our account.’

Carter answered nothing. He was surprised that Webb knew about Beatrice, but he did not show his surprise.

‘And if I refuse?’ he said, with his suave air.

‘O, then,’ said John, his smile breaking into a laugh, ‘I shall have to shoot you like

a dog. But I want to stab you. Will you get down ?'

There was a pause.

'Good,' said Carter. 'As you please.'

The two men dismounted : led their horses to two neighbouring saplings, where they tied them up, and took off their coats, John depositing his revolver. Then they approached one another again.

'I think,' said Carter, turning up his cuffs, 'that there is a better place there—just off the road. It is not so dusty.'

John nodded

'Here are the knives,' he said, holding them out in his hand. 'Choose.'


Carter took one at hazard. They turned and walked together a little back from the road to a spot close to some sheaks. Among them was a deep 'crab-hole,' which had still a little water in it, and there was a plot of grass close beside it. They had both perfect confidence in one another. They opened the knives — long, dagger-like knives, with a spring, which prevented their closing.

Carter took a look at his, and then raised his head.

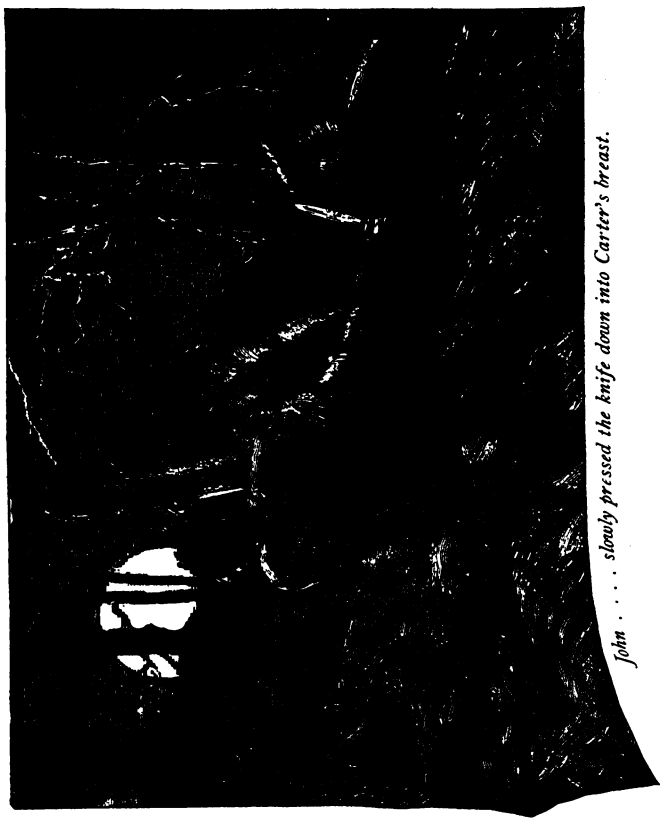
‘We are ready?’ he asked with unruffled courtesy.

John nodded. He was in position, standing gazing at the other with a dreadful expression of joy. For one moment Carter felt the play of it like a shadow on the face of his steely serenity. Then, recovering himself, he advanced with careful assurance. John waited for him. After a few movements and feints, Carter made his leap, and stabbed. John caught the wrist of the threatening right hand with his left, and the next instant his returning blow was arrested in the same manner. The two wrists struck into the two hands with a click-clack, like that of two strokes and parries in fencing. This grip and struggle of theirs filled John with a sort of mad elation. He prolonged it, Carter trying to close with him, and—by wrapping his leg round John’s, and throwing himself forward—to bring him to the ground. John had

never wrestled before in his life, but his instinct told him to avoid this. Feeling himself foiled, Carter slackened his strenuousness, trying to draw the other on, suddenly wrench his right hand free, and stab him. But John refused to be drawn on. He enjoyed the struggle too much to care to end it at once. He only increased his strenuousness in proportion as Carter's decreased, and Carter had quickly to change his tactics. With a sudden twist, freeing his right hand, he struck downwards at John's breast. John caught his wrist again, just as the knife pierced his shoulder—close to the throat. Then with an access of wrath that seemed to strike him like lightning, he closed with Carter, pressing him together with arms, limbs, and body, and the next moment they fell backwards, Carter underneath. For a moment they lay still. Carter had received a blow on the back of the head, John one full in the face. John was the first to recover. He forced himself up, and back, the blood streaming



from his nose onto the cheek and lips of the other. Carter's left arm had got so bent backward in the fall, that he had now no hold on his antagonist's wrist. John loosened it, and—drawing it under him and throwing his weight onto it—slowly pressed the knife down into Carter's breast. Carter's left hand leaped to John's throat and clutched it. They lay there thus, John working the knife into Carter's breast, Carter pressing his fingers into John's throat. In the exultancy of his vengeance, John could have wished to feel the other die, and then die himself. With his face pressed flat onto his, he laughed and cried out inarticulate words—'Stab, stab! she, she, she!' Then Carter's hold relaxed, and, with one wild hoarse laugh and gleaming eyes, John freed himself, and stabbed him again and again. Carter watched him with faintly nodding head, and flickering sardonic smile. John plucked out the knife, and dropped it beside them. Carter was only half conscious now. He raised his hand to his lips, as if to touch



John . . . slowly pressed the knife down into Carter's breast.

and twirl his moustache, and, then, moving his head back a little, closed his eyes. The smile on his lips no longer flickered. It had grown steadfast at the touch of death. John moved his knee from across the body, and remained there, looking at the still face. The horses raised their heads from time to time, and gazed to right and left as if they would know more of something they saw or heard. The moon, with her two stars of east and west, shone down upon them through the tangled tracery of the dead barkless tree-boughs. Far down in the west, behind the belt of green forest, the sunset veins of gold grew less and less intense, the flush of the reefs of rose grew fainter. There was no sound save the faint far murmur from the forest trees, and the chirping of the evening crickets. The wages of sin and shame are earned and paid in full. O Beatrice! O sweet and fair! you had no part in that past of sin and shame, and have no place in this present or the payment of their wages. Never think

of it! Sleep happily, darling. Do not fear the dark. For, when you wake, all else shall be forgotten save the love that is stronger than death.

'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.'

'Sleep happily, darling! sleep happily!'

V.

A BUSH JOURNALIST.

A FEW days later the leading paper of the Warana district, the *Warana Banner*, had at the top of its middle page the following :


‘ A THUNDERBOLT BUSHRANGER AND MURDERER !

*‘ Stupendous rides—daring robberies,—and a desperate
assassination !*

‘ A terrible tragedy has just taken place close to Mamerie. The facts, for which we can vouch, are as follows.—John Webb, the son of a squatter of the district, having quarrelled with his father some months ago, went up country, where he took up a selection close to a station of Mr Carter’s, another squatter of the district. There seem to have been quarrels between young

Webb and Mr Carter's manager, Graham, another Warana man, which culminated in the prosecution by the younger Mr Carter of Webb for sheep-stealing. Webb was summoned to Mamerie before Mr Rogers, the well-known squatter and J.P., and, it seems, actually appeared there on the day before the sitting of the court. In the evening, however, Webb learned that some evidence necessary for his condemnation, but hitherto unprocurable, was forthcoming, and at once left the town on horseback. He was not heard of till the next afternoon, when he appeared at Hoorigal over a hundred miles distant. Here he quietly entered the stable of Mr Stephenson, the well-known squatter, and stud-farmer, and rode off with one of his best thoroughbreds. His own was found subsequently, dead in the road. The next day he appeared at Warana, having accomplished some 300 miles in something over 70 hours. The precise object of this stupendous ride is not yet quite apparent, but it is supposed that

he was pursued on the road by some person or persons whom he had robbed. He spent the next day at Warana in a drunken carouse, and then, riding out to Narrow Plains, the station of Mr Carter the elder, caught one of his thoroughbreds in the horse-paddock and escaped with it, having intimidated one of Mr Carter's men, who would have resisted, by threatening to shoot him with a revolver. From thence he rode straight back again to Mamerie, but in a more leisurely manner. He appeared on the 21st inst. fearlessly at the Paragon, the principal hotel of the place, and entered the bar, where he drank and talked with those present. From them he, unfortunately, learned news of the movements of Mr Rogers and the younger Mr Carter, and it is even suspected that he was warned that there was an order out for his arrest, and that his entry into the town had been remarked. He at once went out into the yard, mounted his horse, and rode away. On the road he must have again exchanged horses, for the



one with which he entered Mamerie was fairly fresh. Constable Thomas, the able and energetic constable of the place, intercepted him at the top of the street, and would have taken him if he had not again escaped by a free show of his revolver. Chase was then given by several of the people of the place, but ineffectually. The younger Mr Carter meantime was quietly returning to his up-country station when Webb came up with him not many hours later. What precisely transpired is not clear, for there was no other witness of the appalling tragedy which ensued. Two days after Webb's disappearance from Mamerie, the inanimate corpse of Mr Carter was discovered a little way from the road, literally weltering in its gore, stabbed to death. There seems to have been a desperate struggle, but there were no signs of Webb's having used his revolver, and two knives, tinged with blood, were discovered close to the body. All these facts can be relied on, as we have them from a

sure hand, and further particulars will appear in a special extra to-morrow morning. The horse Webb rode into Mamerie has been found, but Mr Carter's is missing, and it is supposed that the daring bush-ranger has gone off with it. Every effort is being made by the local police to concert measures for the arrest of Webb, and owing to our peculiar sources of information, readers of the *Banner* may rely on being kept strongly posted up in every authentic detail of this terrific occurrence. Webb was well known in Warana for the violence of his disposition.'

John was now public property, and his name and achievements, or what were reported as such, went flashing over the continent, and were the talk of all men. Scarcely were the facts of the ride from Mamerie to Warana and back, and the death-struggle with Carter, reduced to an authentic shape, as the editor of the *Banner* would have put it, before he was heard of up close to the Queensland border. There

he had met Mr and Mrs Macdonald, a squatter and his wife, on a peaceful progress in their buggy into the neighbouring township, and successfully 'stuck them up,' returning, however, to the lady everything which, in her terror, she offered him. Macdonald himself gave a not unpleasing account of the affair. According to him, Webb had not the look of a ruffian, and some of his remarks were really quite striking. On receiving the squatter's money, he said that this sort of thing could not surely be looked upon as strange in a country where they were all thieves, the only difference being that the strong thieves made the laws and the weak ones suffered by them. Few, however, but Macdonald, who was a bright, intelligent Victorian with a well-developed sense of humour, saw any particular significance in the remark. Scarcely a week later, in the west centre of New South Wales, another squatter was compelled by 'Thunderbolt,' as John was beginning to be called, to exchange horses.

The squatter pleaded hard for his horse, alleging important and urgent business in a neighbouring town, and John agreed to ride with him to the road, and wait there for an hour on the chance of someone else coming up who had *not* important and urgent business; but the time passed, and the exchange had to be made. This horse served Webb for his first large robbery. He 'stuck up' the Branch of the Australian Bank at Millibuggie, and carried off, as the report went, several thousand pounds in notes and gold. From the time and manner in which the robbery was perpetrated, it was evident, said the papers, that he was not alone in the matter. Ideas of an organised gang began to rise round this striking figure.

The horror at his supposed assassination of Carter had now almost passed away, and a feeling almost approaching admiration had taken its place. For some of the real facts of the case had come to light. Many said that he had been unjustly treated by the

Carters, and the purchase of the two knives in Warana, the ride after Carter and the duel of the equally armed men, the one who might have taken advantage of his revolver refusing to do so, wearied out though he was by two tremendous rides—all this had a splendour of rude chivalry in it which appealed to people. Rumours were even afloat that the prosecution against him was a mere persecution by the Carters through their agent Graham, and there were those who shook their heads and said that it would be strange if 'Thunderbolt' killed the master and let the man go free. At this point, too, the one inexplicable part of the whole affair, the ride from Mamerie to Warana, was more or less laid bare, thanks to the 'peculiar sources of information' of the energetic and enterprising editor of the *Warana Banner*. 'It appeared,' he wrote, 'that Carter and Webb had both been paying their addresses for some time to the same young lady, the lovely Miss H——, the belle of the district; and it was the sudden news of her death,

communicated to Thunderbolt by chance at Mamerie, that brought him with such stupendous speed to Warana. We owe him an apology. The day spent at Warana before his return to Mamerie was not, as we stated, spent in a carouse. It was spent far otherwise. It was spent in an agony of grief in the Warana churchyard at the grave of the loved one that was now for ever lost to him !' And the editor proceeded to give an account of Thunderbolt's state of mind at the time, with touches as minute as graphic. And yet, even yet, the eager scribe felt that the mystery, though laid bare, was very considerably less than more so. He spared no pains to alter this. Thunderbolt had made his editorial reputation and more than trebled the regular circulation of his paper. 'It was I,' he would say with complacency, 'who gave him his name, and let all Australia, and England too for the matter of that, know what was the truth about him.' The *Banner* suddenly found itself the recognised weekly

organ of the Riverina selectors, with Thunderbolt as a sort of selector Nemesis brandising retribution over the heads of the squatters. 'He had been hounded down, ruined on his selection by the machinations of the squatters. The squatters talked of having their cattle stolen by selectors. The squatters, it was evident, understood the matter thoroughly! There was no one like a squatter for putting up a dummy, and shouting out that they were in terror of their lives for it. It was high time an end was put to their manipulations of justice.' And so on. But the suspicion which was in his mind he dared not, much as he longed to, declare, for it was no more than a suspicion. He interviewed Mrs Humphreys, Mrs Allen and Miss Allen in the hope of arriving at some conclusion in the matter, but vainly. If they knew anything, they were skilful enough not to have it, as he said, pumped out of them. He took down Miss Hassal's address in Sydney, and meditated following her up. She, he thought, would know.

Why, he was not sure but that she was the only person that *did* know !

Meantime the public interest in Thunderbolt was growing into a furore. His figure and face rose up as a distinct apparition on the horizon of the public mind. Hawkesbury the poet and journalist wrote a short description of him in one of the leading papers, and, aided by this and his memory, a press artist made a sketch of him which sold everywhere. There was indeed something attractive about the man. He had the spell of personal power, the demoniac hold of 'the glittering eye.' A regular cycle of legends surrounded him already. Nor was he wanting in the charm of mystery. What had taken place between him, Carter and that 'lovely Miss H——, the belle of the district?' Dark rumours were afloat. The *Warana Banner*, the paper which still spoke with most authority about him, had begun to hint at 'an infamous tragedy underlying the apparently simple and uneventful course of the relations' of the three.

The editor had been to Sydney and found out Miss Hassal, to whom, with masterly character-insight, as he said, he had adroitly disclosed his suspicions about Carter and Miss Humphreys. He had, it is true, obtained nothing definite from 'this astute young English lady,' but his suspicions were confirmed, and he considered that he now need no longer keep them to himself, and so launched out boldly (as he put it) into the, as it were, infinite of word-painting.

Thunderbolt had not been heard of for over a month. Now suddenly news came that he had reappeared in the district. He had ridden boldly up to Graham's hut, and there in the presence of two of his men who refused to interfere, had thrashed him mercilessly with a heavy stick, and left him senseless on the ground. No direct explanation of the act was offered. The sole remark of Webb's that was reported was, that a thrashing was the very best thing for a cur that theived. He had remounted his

horse and ridden away unmolested towards his own run.

The sun was setting as he came up to the hut. The door was open, and, hearing the sound of the horse-hoofs, Scott came to it and stood waiting for him. John dismounted a little way off, and, with his bridle round his arm, approached with long strides, his face bent reflectively to the ground. The eyes of the two men did not meet till they were within a few yards of each other.

‘Well,’ said John simply, ‘how are you getting on?’

‘Oh,’ answered Scott with a nervous smile and his habitual stammer, ‘p-pretty well.’

‘Have you anyone with you?’

‘Jim D-Davies.’

‘Is he inside?’

‘No.’

‘Can you give me something to eat?’

‘Y-yes.’

John fastened up his horse, and the two men entered the hut. As Scott got out some food and put the billy on the fire to

make tea, John, having cast a few looks round him and noticed that his rifle was missing, asked :

‘Where’s the rifle?’

‘I put it away,’ said Scott, looking up from the fire. ‘It’s under the b-b-bunk on a little ledge between the b-b-bunk and the wa-wall.’

‘Ah,’ he said indifferently, ‘you can have it.’

There was a long silence, John reflecting, his elbows on the table, his head in his hands.

At last :

‘I don’t know,’ he said, ‘what they’ll do about the run.’ He was almost saying something else, but pausing, lost himself again in his thoughts.

‘I’ll w-work it for you,’ said Scott, ‘if you like. We could manage it alright.’

‘You my keep it, then,’ John answered, ‘for I’m full up of it! Say what you like about it, no one’ll contradict you. I’ll write out something about it, if you think it’ll do any good.’

Scott was doubtful.

‘W-well,’ he said, bringing the steaming billy to the table, ‘thank you, anyway, old m-m-man; but I don’t expect they’ll let me keep it altogether. However, you can w-w-write out about it, if you l-like.’

John answered nothing but began his meal, which he finished in silence, Scott sitting on the bunk behind him. Then John turned to him.

‘I’ll write it now,’ he said. ‘Where’s Nigger?’ (Nigger was a black kangaroo dog of John’s, so named because of his colour and resemblance to his old kangaroo dog at Marragong). ‘Was that him barking as I came up?’

‘Yes, him and D-Dot.’

‘I want Nigger, but you can keep the other. Have you got any paper?’

Scott brought some, together with an inkpot and a pen. After a little thought, John wrote:

‘This is to say that my old run, Prospect,

belongs to James Scott, and everything upon it is his for value received. If he cannot be allowed to have everything, then he himself knows what is his own by rights better than anyone else.

‘JOHN WEBB.’

‘I don’t know if it’ll do any good’ he said with a smile, ‘but you must make the best of it. I’ve given you everything of my free will, and what you can get you can have and welcome.—Now,’ he added, getting up, ‘I’m off. Good-night.’

Scott’s thanks were interrupted by John stepping out through the door and going towards the dogs, who hailed his approach with joyous barking. He undid Nigger and came back to his horse. He mounted in silence, Scott standing by.

‘Th-Thank you,’ said Scott, as the other turned the horse’s head. John suddenly drew in the bridle with a keen thoughtful look in his face.

‘I once called you a thief,’ he said. ‘You’re

not—so far as I can see. Keep all you can from the thieves, and that'll please me. I reckon we sha'n't meet again. Good night.'

'Good-night,' answered Scott.

Once again he stood watching the departing rider. There was still a little light in the evening clouds. A low breeze played through the trees like the sound of a sea-surf. John was riding straight into the western scrub. The great black kangaroo dog, rapturous for his freedom, went rushing round here and there in the grass with lowered head. Dot was barking from her kennel. John's figure seemed to grow and loom against the tracery of the trees marked so distinctly by the low light behind them. Scott caught himself thinking of the deep, proud, bitter face looking out at this, the deep, proud, bitter face full of thought and with the feeling of suppressed violence. Nigger had run ahead.

'Come behind!' cried John.

They passed into the timber, and he could see nothing of them but an uncertain move-

ment through the stems. Then that was lost. A flock of minas, in their last excited bout of play before the hour of sleep, flew into a tree close by : stayed there chattering volubly for a few moments, and then flew off again. All was silent save the intermittent murmur of the breeze and the perpetual sound of the evening crickets. Still Scott stood at the door. The breeze was blowing from the east, so that he had no idea of catching a sound of hoofs. At last he heaved a sigh.

‘There goes Thunderbolt!’ he said to himself.

A wagtail flew into a tree beside him and set up its monotonous cry. Scott turned : went into the hut, and threw himself into the bunk, John’s bunk. What was the bird to him—what its ceaseless, monotonous cry ?

‘*O Bea-trice-trice ! O Bea-trice-trice !*’

VI.

SOCKET FLICKERINGS.

It was not long before several attempts were made by the police to capture Thunderbolt, but they had no success. The speed of his movements, his calm audacity, his knowledge of the country, the sympathy of a large portion of the community with him, made him for the present impervious to a systematic pursuit. All the time, however, there were not lacking those who kept on agitating for his capture, and exclaimed that he was a standing witness to the inefficacy of the constables. That they had great difficulties to contend with, no one who knew anything of the matter doubted. On the other hand there was a general impression abroad that these difficulties were made the very most of,

or, in a word, that the men were inclined to be cowardly. At times John was almost on the point of letting himself be caught. The idea of a desperate death-struggle was not without its charms to him. His one anxiety was lest he should be taken *alive*—not in a struggle, (for he would, he thought, prevent that), but as he slept. This was why he had Nigger with him. He was indeed fast wearying of his life. The news, however, that a big attempt was about to be made to hunt him down, gave him back some of his old energy. Then he happened to light upon a newspaper in which he was discussed in one of the leading articles. The writer was taking the opportunity for a little malicious mockery of the squatters. ‘Here,’ he said, ‘is the evident advantage of the country having for its richest members a convict aristocracy. The fathers are brought out at the expense of Government, and encouraged to absorb land at nominal rents, and then they beget children who prey on the peaceful community which would fain content itself with the crumbs

that fall from the squatters' tables.' It was a random blow, the precise significance of which the writer would not himself have been able to explain. It roused John to momentary fury. He had read scarcely anything of what had been said about him, from sheer indifference to it all. At the same time he knew quite well the notoriety which he had obtained. It was written in very legible characters on the face of everyone who met and knew him. But it was all as nothing to him. Whatever he did, he did because it gave him more pleasure to do it than not to do it, and he asked himself no questions. Life indeed seemed to him to be a sort of insane whirlpool thronged with struggling men, each intent on mere existence, or, if chance had cast them onto a plank, ferociously thrusting back all others from it. He had lost the sense of order in things. The reckless strife of nature was apparent to him, and now the life of nature seemed to him to lap round and enclose the life of man as the sea does a river. But he

was not resigned to it. At times he would have wild bursts of anger against 'the thieves,' as he called the dominant members. He had a certain feeling of his being an instrument of retribution. He was one of 'the honest,' who had thrown aside the duty of endurance, and faced the brutal world with brutality. He had a savage joy in some of his robberies—in those in which he recognised the countenance of 'a thief.' More than once it had occurred to him that he would like to ride into Sydney or Melbourne: seek out one of the greatest of 'the thieves' and shoot him, as a sign to the others that a lie was not always everywhere omnipotent. All about him he saw the poor oppressed, their weakness taken advantage of to extort from them ruinous terms of labour. His anger turned from 'the thieves' to those who supported 'the thieves'—the men of religion. A squatter's mansion was a lie, and its pendant lie was a church. Lies everywhere! Even the poor were infected with this scab of duplicity. The whole earth was a gigantic

exemplar of the worship of outrage and wrong. And yet there were some few that were honest, but with what a fate! *To endure for ever in silence!*—These men who cried out so against lies, these indignant orators and writers, what were they but liars who had failed, and burned at the sight of others' success? The pure hideousness of the earth was overwhelming. And he—what could he think, or say, or do to help it all? A few wild inarticulate cries into the sweet-rushing heedless daytime or the dark voluptuous night—a few desperate acts understood by none—not even by himself; and this was all the protest he could make against unworthy Fate. Better to die, better to die!

All these thoughts surged confusedly in him. He could not formulate them: they struck and stung him like hornets, and rushed away booming into the viewless airs. His soul was like a volcano in the throes of eruption. He had no clear perception of things. He did not know that there was anyone who had ever felt as he felt. His

absolute loneliness made the anguish of this unknown disease that was consuming him well-nigh intolerable. He had nothing to help, nothing to guide him. Once the idea of what he had heard people call God came to him, and he stared wildly round the chaos of life for signs of Him, but could find none. The possibility of an Order and a Love in the agony of this insane whirlpool never occurred to him. If anyone had told him of it, he would have laughed aloud. This did very well for 'the thieves' who wanted to eat their honey and keep the poor to their sour 'damper;' but for whom else? Was it not enough that they should be lies themselves, but that they must needs go and make the Creator of everything a lie too? And yet it was like enough, after all. *Like father, like son! Like Creator, like creature!*

In all his long rides and hours alone (and almost all his hours now were alone) he would think of these things, and strive desperately to understand them, like a child in the dark, reasoning of its superstitious

fears. Sometimes the feeling of his weakness would come upon him, and wring the tears and sobs from him. Ah God, was there no one, no one in the whole earth to help him? No, not one; for who had ever felt as *he* felt? If he were to speak of it to others, they would either think him mad or revile him as wicked. *Endure, endure for ever in silence!*

From a renewed fit of despair of unusual duration and intensity he was at last roused by the news that the police were positively 'out for him,' as his friendly informant put it, and in considerable numbers. Under a sudden impulse he rode into Walla (a township eighty miles or so due east of Warana) to the railway station: tied his horse up to the rails outside, and went, followed by Nigger, into the office, where he found two clerks.

'I want a telegram sent at once,' he said. 'One of you sit down and send it.'

The younger of the two, a boy, impressed by John's air of authority, sat down opposite the machine and sounded it. The other,

however, began to protest. John turned on him fiercely.

‘Shut your mouth,’ he said, ‘without you want harm done you.’

The clerk made a motion towards the open door. John drew out his revolver.

‘Sit down in that chair,’ he said.

The clerk sat down.

‘Take this message,’ said John to the other. Nigger, having made a cursory but suspicious examination of things, lay down by his master.

The boy rose : found a piece of paper and a pencil : sat down, and looked up with a rather scared face. John dictated.

‘John Webb, Walla. To the head of the Police, Sydney.—If you are coming after me with your thief-agents, you will waste your time and the money of your thief-employers. Your men are cowards, and cowards should not risk their lives. If you reach me, be sure fewer of you will go back than come. The earth shall have one or two less liars on it. I will wait you in the

scrub a hundred miles to the north-west of here.'

He paused.

'That will do,' he said. 'Now telegraph it, and don't make any mistake. I will wait till it's done.'

He began to pace up and down the room, thinking, Nigger following him with raised eyes. His anger had passed from him. At last the telegram was finished, but the boy did not dare to say so. He and his companion sat still, looking at John pacing up and down, unconscious of them. The station was empty save for the wife and children of the elder clerk, who were in one of the rooms behind this. Nothing broke the shadowy silence but the ticking of the machine and the regular sound of John's footfalls up and down, up and down. Then one of the children could be heard crying, and the mother called out to her husband :

'Al-fred—Al-fred !'

'Ah,' said John, suddenly stopping, 'is it done ?'

‘Yes,’ answered the boy.

‘Good.’

Then he seemed to think the matter was ended, and without a word went out, followed by Nigger; came up to his horse, loosened and mounted him, and rode away.

It was not until they heard the sound of the horse’s hoofs, that the two clerks emerged from the office. They stood on the platform in silence, watching him ride away.

At last :

‘My word,’ said the man, ‘that’s Thunderbolt! It’s good,’ he added, ‘that he didn’t murder us.’

‘Why,’ said the boy, who had recovered himself, ‘there’s no fear of that. We’re poor men. He never touches poor men. Look at his dorg.’

‘I expect he’ll cut the lines,’ said the man. He turned to the boy :

‘What did you send?’ he asked.

‘The message, o’ course; what else?’

‘I hope it mayn’t get us into trouble, that’s all.’

‘Not it! It’s nothing to do with us. We’ll have an answer presently, if he don’t cut the lines,’ said the boy, laughing.

The lines were not cut. John was riding leisurely towards the place where he had told the police to seek him, in the scrub a hundred miles to the north-west of Walla. He had never felt more like fighting to the death, than when he rode towards the railway station; and yet now, as he rode away from it, he had never felt the great grey sense of utter helplessness or hopelessness so oppress him.

EPILOGUE.

'FATE'S ONLY GUERDON.'

Not many months after John had met him in Melbourne, Hawkesbury, in a fit of disgust with the city, its people, and the lives they led, and compelled him to lead, took a post 'up country,'—in the north-western part of New South Wales, that is,—as boundary-rider on one of the smaller stations of Mr Medwin, yet another of the 'well-known squatters.' Hawkesbury left behind him, as a sort of farewell speech, to the civilisation which had rejected him, his first volume of poems, 'Random Rymes,' since so well-known. His reception and treatment on the station and the life he led there pleased him. The Medwins rarely visited the place, leaving it almost entirely in the

hands of their manager, a Mr Duncan. Duncan, who was married and had a small family, found himself very comfortably off. He lived at 'the house,' as it was called, a rambling bush edifice, built originally by Mr Medwin's father, one of the earliest settlers and a convict. Duncan at once recognised the superior character of the boundary rider, and invited him up to 'the house,' instead of leaving him in the hut with the men. Hawkesbury's position was in fact, something above that of an ordinary station-hand and below that of an overseer. Duncan spoke of him as his 'assistant,' and did what he could to make things comfortable and pleasant for him, and his wife, a bonnie, kindly Scotch woman, followed suit. At the end of a few months Hawkesbury found that he owed them a real debt of gratitude. His disgust with his life had left him; his soul's festering wounds had lost their inflammation and were cicatrising over. It was at this hour that the station was suddenly startled by the news of a visit

from the Medwins, and presently there arrived the two sons, one a young man and the other a boy, the tutor of the younger, Miss Medwin (a relative of the family), and one of Mrs Medwin's housekeepers. Mrs Duncan, with a rare delicacy, determined that, although Hawkesbury would have to give up the room he at present occupied, he should not be relegated to the hut. There was at the back of the house a little chamber scarcely larger than a cupboard, and this, with a simple explanation, she gave to him. It was a sign of his improved state of mind that he was not offended at her, but saw the case simply as it was. His pride had lost its morbidity.

And thus it came about that Hawkesbury not only met Miss Medwin, that sweet and radiant vision of high modern womanhood, but as we all know now, fell in love with her. The inner essence 'the poetry and truth,' of this tale can be traced in his second and third book of poems since published, and indeed, the stamp of it is visible in all he

ever afterwards wrote. When the time came in which Miss Medwin returned to Mrs. Medwin in Melbourne, Hawkesbury found that the effort to stay in this place, which had been made so heavenly bright and musical to him by her presence, was too great for him, and in a few months regretfully parted from it and from the manager and his family. He was now no longer pressed for time or money, and it fell in with his humour to ride down slowly through the Riverina into Victoria. He had an excellent horse; the weather was peerless, and he was as happy as, under the circumstances, it was possible for him to be. Half way on his road an incident occurred. He came upon a man in a two-horsed buggy, lost, and with one of his horses hopelessly lamed. The two men at once liked one another, and, their liking growing in proportion with their acquaintance, it ended in the lame horse being disposed of at a neighbouring station, Hawkesbury's taking its place, and the two men proceeding in company. This

new friend was none other than Macdonald, the bright intelligent Victorian squatter with a well - developed sense of humour, whom John had distinguished as his first victim of robbery under arms. It happened, however, that the two fellow-travellers did not learn from one another that they had both had personal dealings with the notorious 'Thunderbolt.' Hawkesbury was inclined to be silent and sad, but not gloomy or bitter. The state of his relations with Miss Medwin (and this meant above all the personal influence of Miss Medwin herself) did not admit of a return to his old disgust with things. If he had any feeling that could lead him in this direction, it related to the anticipations of a life without her, a life of toil, the whole zest and care of which was gone. More than once it had seemed to him that death was preferable to such a life, and more than once he had calmly asked himself whether he would not himself take that which he preferred? To a man in a state like this nothing

much better could have been prescribed than the companionship of a man like Macdonald. Under his brightness and intelligence there was his humour; the face of the stream was lit with sunshine, but the depths flowed on with calm below. He had received an average education, which he had supplemented largely by reading and experience. He had made several trips to Europe, and turned onto everything he saw a gaze of that sort of unaffected penetration which is so far to be met with chiefly in Americans. He had, too, the instinct of fastening on what was best, both in books and men, and absorbing it into himself. And to all this he added a nature of spontaneous kindliness. His toleration was a part of it: he had the same good humour for a bigot as for a pure and simple *viveur*; for (as his Church-of-England 'society' wife once put it) Frederick was really *too* lax, you know, about religion and morals. His character was always at the expansion, because he never thought of troubling to try and put any curb on it.

On Hawkesbury, then, with whom he had enough in common to make their mutual liking a reality, his influence fell like rain on a sun-blind land of drought. They travelled on side by side day after day, passing from station to station, everywhere received with cheerful welcome, never wearying of one another, spending the hours together with that effortlessness of spontaneity which is the one real parent of pleasure. Hawkesbury was delighted by the reception he was accorded, and responded to it in a manner that surprised himself. He had for so long nursed his pride in his dealings with people that he did not know that he could ever again be at his ease, as he had been in England before, with a broken career and a broken fortune, he had learnt the bitterness of summer friends turned wintry, and a girl who had 'examined the state of her heart' (and of his affairs) 'and could not think she loved him otherwise than as a sister.' Mr Macdonald was, as all who knew him said, charming, and Mr Hawkesbury was the

friend of Mr Macdonald, and so the two, being both of them (presumably) charming, had to be met with all the amount of charm procurable. Thus their entertainers felt, and Hawkesbury too, in some way feeling it, responded to it with the above results.

It was a lovely sunny morning after a pleasant night's rest and amusement of this sort, at a friendly station-house. The two friends were driving along together, laughing and talking, Hawkesbury with his small American rifle keeping a look out for a shot at wild turkeys (bustards) which abounded. A stage of forty miles was before them, but the horses were in fairly good condition and would then have a week's rest, Macdonald having business at this next place of stoppage, which was none other than Warana. The day grew quickly hotter and hotter. All above them reached the immense cloudless vault of the heaven, here of a wonderful depth of blue, here pallid and almost white, passing into imperceptible gradations. The heat waved up from the ground as from a

fire. The only extenuating circumstance, as Macdonald said, was the cool breeze which blew from time to time. Towards mid-day, Hawkesbury, returning from stalking and shooting his second turkey, Macdonald suggested that they would 'camp' and have lunch. They were in open plain country dotted with occasional trees and clumps. He pointed with his whip to one of these clumps about half-a-mile in front of them. It was composed for the most part of fine large gum-trees (so-called 'apple-trees'), hedged about with a small plantation of sheak.

'I expect,' he said, as Hawkesbury got into the buggy, 'that there's water there.'

They drove on towards it. It was indeed, as they could see, a charming spot—'A sort of oasis from England put down here in the Australian scrub,' said Hawkesbury.

'Well, yes,' answered Macdonald, 'it *has* a bit of an English look, now that you notice it, but there are plenty of places like it about here'

‘It isn’t often,’ said Hawkesbury, ‘that I see here that sort of *depth* of tree-foliage which is so beautiful in England. The sound of the murmur of deep dark trees above the long, thick, shaded grass brings such a sense of rest with it. I cannot tell you how often I have longed for it. There is something of this there, I think.’

They were quite close now, both looking at it with pleasure and interest.

‘I’m right,’ said Macdonald, ‘that patch of bright green grass in the middle means water.’

‘—What’s that?’ asked Hawkesbury, turning his head a little. ‘Didn’t you hear it?’

‘Yes,’ answered Macdonald. Then, after a pause: ‘There it is again. It’s a dog howling.’

At that moment they both of them caught sight of a horse feeding under some low green boughs past the patch of grass.

‘Someone’s before us,’ said Macdonald.

‘Yes,’ said the other, bending aside a little

to look. 'He's lying on the grass there with the dog at his head. It's a black kangaroo dog.'

They drove on and entered the clump. The figure of the man was now quite clear to them and of the dog at his head. The same hushed look had grown in the faces of the two men. Macdonald drew up and, after a pause, said very quietly :

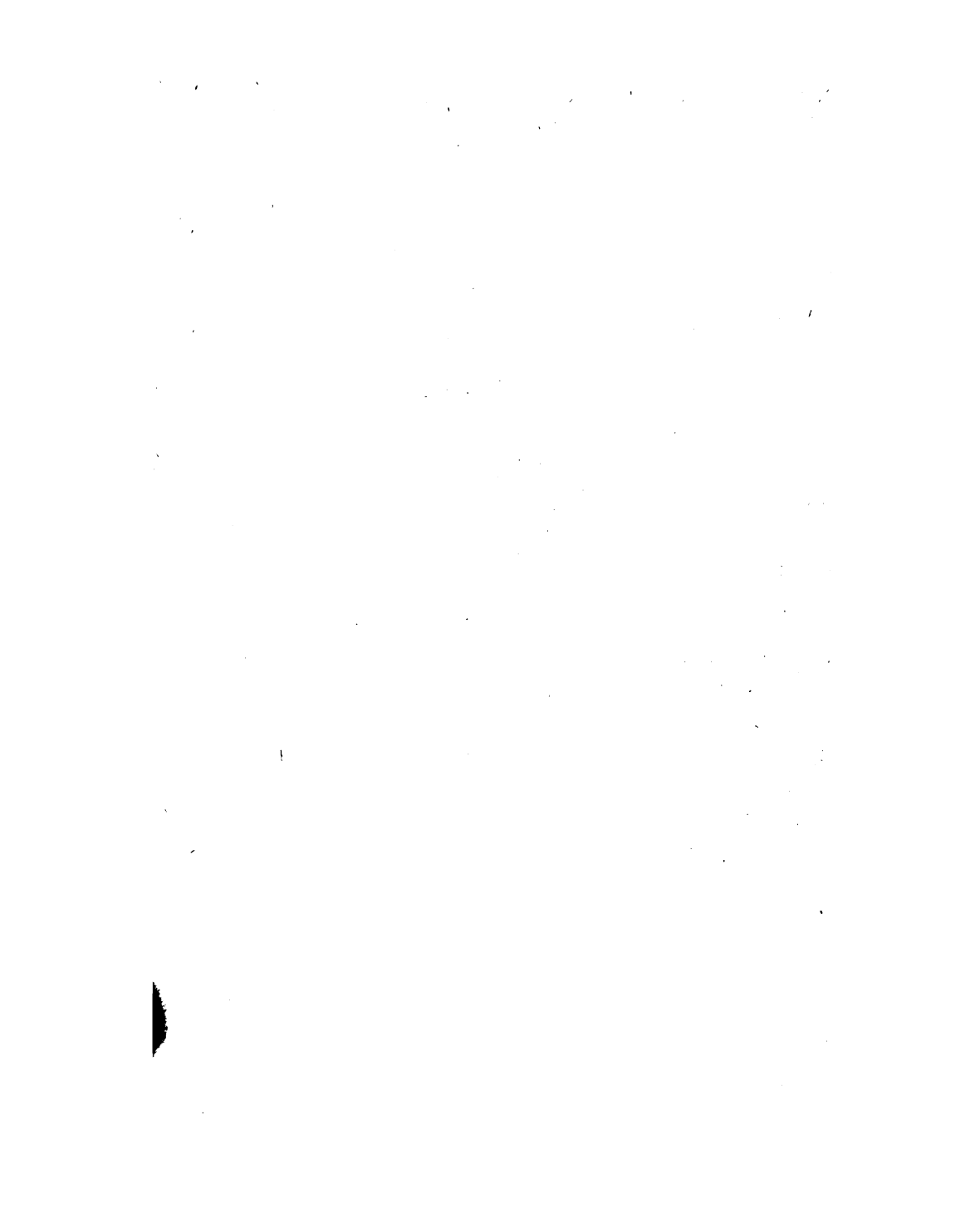
'I think he's dead.'

'I'll go and see,' said Hawkesbury, leaning his rifle up against the seat and getting down.

He paced on slowly, over the shaded grass in the sound of the rustling and murmuring trees, to the patch of bright green, and the recumbent man and the dog. The horse behind them lifted up his head, and looked at him with attentive ears and great dark eyes: the bridle was trailing. He would not glance at the man's face and form till he was quite close. Then, coming to a standstill, he looked steadfastly. The man was dead, shot through the heart, bitterly smil-



Then, coming to a standstill, he looked.



ing. Hawkesbury's heart leaped. He recognised Webb. For a few moments he remained like one bewildered, unconscious. His eyes regarded the face and form without recognising what they had to do with the actuality of things. The right hand, lying by the side, touched a revolver. The black kangaroo dog stood at gaze at the intruder's face, uncertain what to make of it. Hawkesbury fell on his knees and looked closer, putting his hand with a sort of still reverence gently in through the opening of the coat into the singed and blood-stained shirt over the heart.

'Dead,' he thought to himself, 'killed by his own hand—Thunderbolt!'

The body was stiff.

He rose, and came back with bent head to the buggy.

'Well,' said Macdonald. 'He's *dead*?'

'Yes,' said Hawkesbury, 'shot—with his own hand—Thunderbolt.'

'*What!*' cried Macdonald, '*Thunderbolt?*'

‘Yes, Thunderbolt.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘I knew him.’

‘So did I. . . . I’ll go and see.’

He jumped out: tied the horses to a tree, and the two men returned to the body together. The trees kept up their rustling murmur, and every now and then the dog howled.

‘Yes,’ said Macdonald, standing and looking at the dead face, ‘it’s Thunderbolt alright. . . .’

Then the two began to consult together, and, having arrived at a plan of action, sat down on the grass a little way off and silently ate their meal. This done, Macdonald unsaddled the dead man’s horse, which they had caught and tied up: saddled his own and rode away. He was going on to Warana for assistance, while Hawkesbury would remain here with the buggy. Hawkesbury had insisted on Macdonald going, as he knew the way and he himself did not, and there was no time to be lost,

and at last Macdonald had agreed. He rode away at a quick trot. Hawkesbury watched him go: then returned, and tried to make friends with the dog, but vainly. It would have nothing to do with him, refusing even to touch the food he threw to it. He came and stood and looked for long at the dead face. He thought of what he had known of John, and of what he had read of him, and tried to make the story lead up to this tragic end and the peace and bitter smile of the dead face there. At last he heaved a deep sigh and went away a little, and threw himself down in the shaded grass, and thought. The trees kept up their rustling murmur, and every now and then the dog howled. And still Hawkesbury lay, till his thoughts began to take a certain active shape and sound to him. He searched in his pocket for his note-book, and, taking out the pencil and placing the note-book on the grass, lay looking at it. Presently he began to write. Line by line, verse by verse, the poem grew, till it was

complete, and he read it through and knew that he could not better it.

‘THUNDERBOLT.’

Across the summer plains and stainless skies
The vocal breeze, with snatches of birds’ song,
Blows to this green oasis where he lies ;
The black hound at his head wails low and long.

His lips and eyes are bitter-bright, smiling.
Is he asleep, drawing a quiet breath ?
Brother, this life was so accursed a thing
Thou would’st not wait the stealthy step of death ?

Great lion Soul ! stricken with the poisoned dart
Of all this weary world and selfish men,
Bearing thy wounded strength hither apart
To give it back alone to God again—

Brother, not here thee may I blame, but praise,
In that thou knowest whether it be best
To drag the burthen of unworthy days,
Or pluck from Fate his only guerdon—Rest !’

For long he lay there, still full of thought
and of his verse and the rustling murmur of
the trees. Then he rose, and once more
went to look—for the last time, as he told
himself—upon the dead face. And so he
stood with his eyes fixed on it in that scene

of wonderful music, sad and soft and sweet, and yet not unexultant, and, perhaps, if he had known how to catch the accents of it, as it played on those lips and eyes whose smile was so bright and bitter and yet so full of peace, he might have heard them as a divine interlude :——

‘Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm : for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave : the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

‘Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it : if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned !’

THE END

Eden, Remington & Co.'s New Novels

ONLY CLARCHEN. By ISABEL DON. *Two vols., crown 8vo, 21s.*

'The interest is well sustained. . . . The setting of the story is very effective.'—*Scotsman*.

WAS SHE HIS WIFE? From the German of W. HEIMBURG. Translated by HELEN WOLFF. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'The author has succeeded in presenting an attractive heroine of a thoroughly German type. . . . The character of her spendthrift brother, the selfish, elegant officer, for whom she sacrifices herself and nearly ruins her life, is also well conceived.'—*Athenæum*.

POLLY MOUNTEMPLE: A Fin-de-Siecle Story of the Stage. By CHARLES HOLLIS. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'The story is lively.'—*Saturday Review*.

'Must prove an interesting work of fiction.'—*Punch*.

'Is a remarkably realistic description of life behind the burlesque and music-hall scenes.'—*Graphic*.

FAIR CASTAWAYS: A Romance of War and Storm. By F. H. WINDER. Author of 'Lost in Africa,' etc. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'Is briskly written, and frequently exciting.'—*Sunday Times*.

'The narrative moves briskly along from one scene of excitement to another, and the local colouring being accurate, the reader requires but little strain on his imagination to feel almost as interested as a personal spectator.'—*People*.

ROMANCE BY PROXY: A Story of the Soudan War. By EVANS COMYN. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'The book on the whole is alike interesting, amusing, and instructive.'—*Vanity Fair*.

'An original, interesting, and well-written story.'—*Literary World*.

'Faithfully correct in the descriptions of Egyptian manners and Nile scenery.'—*Piccadilly*.

JENNY. By M. A. CURTOIS, Author of 'Tracked,' etc. *Crown 8vo, 5s.*

'The story is told with much literary skill and with realistic effect.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

Eden, Remington & Co.'s New Novels

A POLITICAL WIFE. By Mrs HUBERT BOURKE.

Crown 8vo, 6s.

'Is bright and amusing.'—*Morning Post*.

'The book is full of incident and lovemaking.'—*Athenæum*.

'They will find it full of interest from cover to cover.'—*England*,

LIPPA. By BEATRICE EGERTON. *Crown 8vo, 3s 6d.*

'Those who are interested in the trivial round of fashionable life will like the book.'—*Sunday Times*.

'Is a pretty tale well told.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

NEW NOVEL BY DR GORDON STABLES

THE MYSTERY OF A MILLIONAIRE'S GRAVE. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'Dr Gordon Stables has produced a matter of fact narrative, interspersed with some sensational matter.'—*Athenæum*.

THE BLINDNESS OF MEMORY EARLE.

By CHARLES T. C. JAMES, Author of 'A Romance of the Queen's Hounds,' 'Against the Grain,' etc. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'To give an outline of the story would be to deprive intending readers of much pleasure. We shall therefore content ourselves with bidding all those whose literary palate is not vitiated to judge for themselves of the merits of this admirable novel.'—*Vanity Fair*.

THE CHILD OF OCEAN. By RONALD ROSS.

Crown 8vo, 6s.

'It is a curious book. It bristles with blood-curdling incidents.'—*Morning Post*.

'A really remarkable and original romance, picturesquely and powerfully written.'—*Sunday Times*.

'Is drawn with a master hand, and the result is a work of unusual power and excellence. A remarkable book, and one of real genius.'—*Standard*.

AN UNWILLING WIFE. By ALICE CLIFTON.

Crown 8vo. 6s.

'"An Unwilling Wife" is considerably above the average of new novels in theme, style, and characterisation.'—*Saturday Review*.

EDEN, REMINGTON & CO., King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.

Eden, Remington & Co.'s Recent Poetry

FANCIES ON FACTS, and other Poems. By
the Rev. R. H. FALKNER, M.A. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

'The work is far above the average of latter day poetry, being full of fine thoughts finely expressed.'—*People*.

THORKELL. Poem. By the late B. MONTGOMERIE
RANKING, Author of 'Fair Rosamond,' &c. *Crown
8vo. 6s.*

"Thorkell" will do much to keep its author's memory green among those who love good work.'—*Manchester Examiner*.

'The whole poem is spirited in its movement.'—*Graphic*.

**SELECTIONS from the CANZONIERE of
FRANCESCO PETRARCA.** Translated by
CYFAILL, Author of 'Song Strays.' *Crown 8vo. 3s 6d.*

'Many of the beauties of the great originals are rendered with both gracefulness and poetic feeling.'—*People*.

WEDDED IN DEATH, and other Poems. By A.
E. HINSELWOOD. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

"Wedded in Death" giving the title to the book. It is a thrilling poem, the versification being remarkably flowing and graceful. "Strangers and Pilgrims," "Cast up by the Sea," etc., are all of very considerable merit.'—*Newcastle Chronicle*.

CHARYBDIS, and other Poems. By H. M. WAITH-
MAN. *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

'Form a volume that will pass a pleasant hour.'—*New York Herald*.

EDEN, REMINGTON & CO., King Street, Covent Garden.

Eden. Remington & Co.'s New Novels

AT ALL LIBRARIES

LA FENTON. By GWENDOLEN DOUGLAS GALTON.

Two vols., crown 8vo.

'All the characters are drawn with a certain amount of vigour.'—*Academy*.

'Those who enjoy a romantic love story, seasoned with villainy, and told in flowery language, will find it here.'—*Anti-Jacobin*.

'This is a decidedly good novel, that will find numbers of appreciative readers.'—*Vanity Fair*.

LIFE, YET NOT LIFE. By WILLIAM WAKEFIELD,

Author of 'Our Life and Travels in India,' etc.

Crown 8vo, 6s.

'The author's knowledge of India is as complete as can be desired, and enables him to give a strong local colouring to his tale.'—*Morning Post*.

THE GOVERNESS, or the Baroness in Disguise.

From the German of S. MELNEC. Translated by

H. A. M. H. *Crown 8vo, 6s.*

'The story is thoroughly well thought out.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

'Decidedly readable.'—*People*.

**THE DAUGHTER OF THE COMMAND-
ANT: A Russian Romance.** By ALEXKSANDR

POUSHKIN. Translated by Mrs MILNE HOME. *Crown*

8vo, 6s.

'Has the merit of being short and interesting.'—*New York Herald*.

'We can recommend this book as worth the reading.'—*Evening News*.

THE THREE DREAMS. By A. M. EVILL. *Crown*

8vo, 6s.

'A few pleasant hours can be spent in the reading of it.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

Eden, Remington & Co.'s New Books

FREE TRADE IN CAPITAL; or Free Competition in the Supply of Capital to Labour and its bearings on the Political, Social and Economic Questions of the Day. By **EGMONT HAKE** (Chairman of the Free Trade in Capital League) and **O. E. WESSLAU.** *Demy 8vo. 15s.*

'Is a book which all economists should study line by line.'—*People.*

'Is certain to attract a deal of notice among economists and students of our political and social systems.'—*Evening News.*

'The authors show considerable dialectic skill.'—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

SOMETHING ABOUT HORSES, SPORT AND WAR. By **H. STRICKLAND CONSTABLE.** *Crown 8vo. 5s.*

'Is bright and readable.'—*Scotsman.*

'Most sensible and practical are many of Mr Constable's remarks.'—*Saturday Review*

THE WAVERLEY PROVERBIAL BIRTHDAY BOOK. By the Right Rev. **CHARLES WORDSWORTH**, Bishop of St Andrews. *Post 8vo. cloth, gilt edges, 2s 6d.; in vellum 3s 6d.*

'It is a pretty volume, and the quotations consist of a collection of proverbs and pithy sayings from the Waverley Novels.'—*Glasgow Herald*

THE MARK TWAIN BIRTHDAY BOOK
Sixth Edition. *Cloth, gilt edges, 2s 6d.; post free, 2s 9d.*

'"The Mark Twain Birthday Book," with its amusing impertinence has reached a third edition.'—*Bradford Observer.*

Eden, Remington & Co.'s New Books

POETS' WALK. An Introduction to English Poetry, for the use of Schools. Chosen and arranged by MOWBRAY MORRIS. *Fcap. 8vo. 5s. Third Edition.*

'No better work of the kind has ever been published. Very few have been published which are half so good.'—*World*.

THE SIN OF JOOST AVELINGH: A Dutch Story. By MAARTEN MAARTENS, Author of 'An Old Maid's Love.' *Popular edition, in railway boards, 2s. ; Library edition, 2 vols. 12s.*

'Worthy to take its place in the front rank of contemporary fiction English or Continental.'—*Westminster Review*.

'"The Sin of Joost Avelingh" deserves the praise it has received.'—*Times*.

'Surprises the fiction readers of the world.'—*Public Opinion* (American).

FOUR RED NIGHTCAPS. By C. J. HYNE, Author of 'Beneath Your Very Boots,' &c. *Crown 8vo. 3s 6d.*

'Mr Hyne's "Four Red Nightcaps" is somewhat in the style of "Three Men in a Boat," only there are "Four Men in a Yacht."'—*Punch*.

'A merry recital . . . of a yachting cruise on the west coast of Scotland. . . . Brightly depicted, and with a ready flow of humour.'—*Saturday Review*.

DUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: A Tale of London Life. By H. SUTHERLAND EDWARDS. *Paper cover, 1s. ; post free, 1s 2d.*

'Is a well-written tale of London life.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

CAPTURED IN COURT. A Novel in 19 chapters. By SYLVAIN MAYER and ANTONY GUEST. *Paper cover, 1s. ; post free, 1s 2d.*

'The story is told with an interesting simplicity of style, and involved with some ingenuity.'—*Scotsman*.

'We can recommend this really clever novel as being exceedingly readable. . . . Is full of interest.'—*Newcastle Chronicle*.

Eden, Remington & Co.'s New Books

THIRTY-THIRD THOUSAND OF

TOLSTOI'S KREUTZER SONATA. *Paper cover*

1s. ; *post free*, 1s 2d.

'The book ought to be read. Is translated from the Russian into fluent and idiomatic English.'—*St James's Gazette*.

'There are touches of characteristic realism. The "Kreutzer Sonata" is admirably translated.'—*Vanity Fair*.

'Its merit is in its courageous and masterly handling of a very old, but what of late years has become a very grave and pressing problem—that of marriage.'—*Evening News and Post*.

THOUGHTS OF A QUEEN. By CARMEN SYLVA (Elizabeth, Queen of Roumania). *Paper covers*, 1s. ; *post free*, 1s 2d.

'They are, perhaps, most interesting when they present the thoughts of a Queen on the subject of Royalty.'—*Daily News*.

'Everybody should acquire "Thoughts of a Queen." It is a very suggestive little book, full of the results of keen observation of the world, expressed in admirably epigrammatic form.'—*Globe*.

'It ought to have an extensive sale.'—*Evening News and Post*.

THE MISSING MEMBER: or. Sergeant Clinch's Secret. By T. MARCHANT WILLIAMS (Elwin Lee). *Paper cover*, 1s. ; *post free*, 1s 2d.

'A very clever little story, with a most ingenious plot.'—*Newcastle Chronicle*.

'Is a tale of mystery and plot, in which there is considerable flavour of Fenianism and some touch of Irish character.'—*Glasgow Herald*.

SCENES FROM SOCIETY. By Sir WILLIAM L. YOUNG, Bart. *Small demy* 1s. ; *post free*, 1s 2d.

'Sir William L. Young, Bart., has evidently inherited a large measure of the ability of his father, the author of "Jim the Penman." . . . He has just published a little *brochure*, called "Scenes from Society," which shows that he has a good deal of the dramatic faculty.'—*Globe*.

EDEN, REMINGTON & Co., King St, Covent Garden, W.C.

